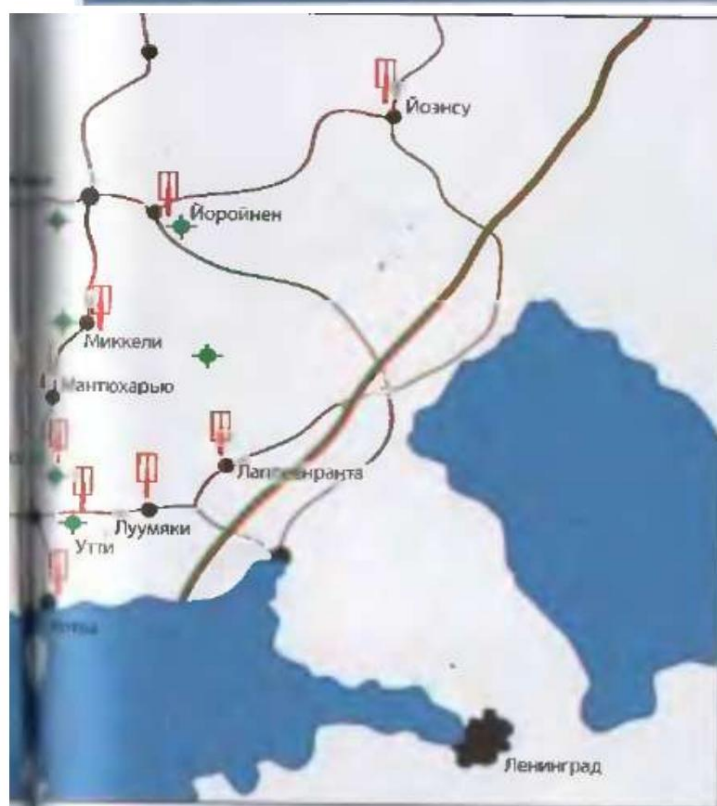




Map No. 10 Scheme of basing Finnish bomber and Soviet fighter aircraft.

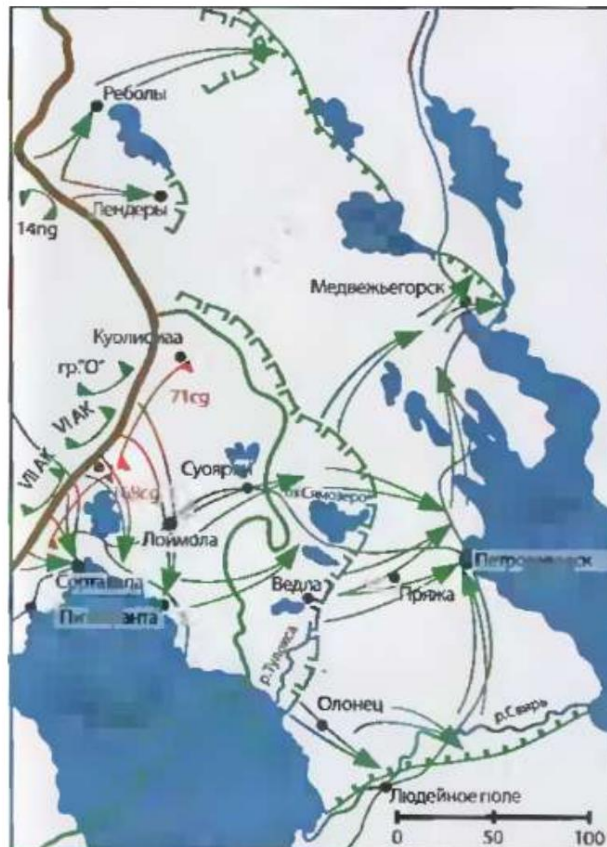


Map No. 11 Scheme of basing Soviet bomber and Finnish fighter aircraft.



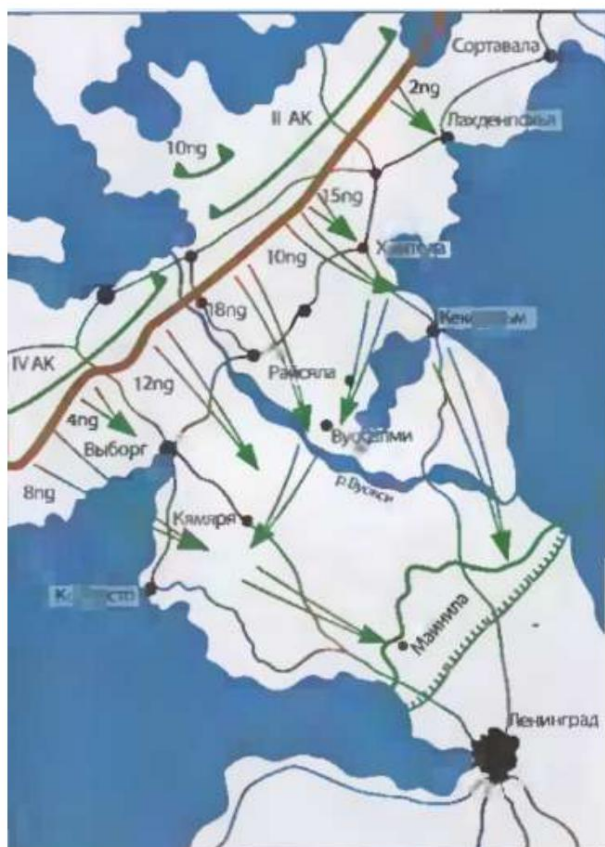
Map number 12. Bombardment of Finland 25–26 June 1941

Map No. 13 fighting July 2-7, 1941



Map number 14. The offensive of the Finnish army in Ladoga Karelia, 1940, the border of the 1939 front on December 8, 1941

border  
line



Map number 15. The offensive of the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus in 1940 — 1939 border — front line on September 1, 1941

In our opinion, the most meaningful research method is not endless attempts to extract the hidden meaning from overheard conversations and intercepted letters, but an analysis of **real events, real facts of cooperation between the German and Finnish armies**. Such cooperation undoubtedly existed. It is equally obvious that real actions should have been preceded by negotiations between the military, joint work of the command and staffs. Without this, not only the joint conduct of hostilities would be impossible, but also the simple redeployment of German troops from Norway and Germany to Finland.

By a strange irony of fate, a group of military men led by the Chief of the General Staff of the Finnish Army, General Heinrichs, flew from Helsinki to Salzburg at those very hours (in the evening of May 24, 1941). when a meeting of the country's top military-political leadership with the command of the western districts was held in Stalin's office. During three days of negotiations with the German generals, including the chief of staff of the operational leadership, Colonel-General A. Jodl, the Finns were informed about the specific content of the operational plans for the war on the northern flank of the Soviet-German front. No documents and joint decisions were made; moreover, Heinrichs did not have the authority to sign any agreements [22, 26, 65].

On June 3, two German colonels arrived in Helsinki for a meeting with Heinrichs: the chief of staff of the army "Norway" Buschenhagen and a representative of the headquarters



High Command Kinzel. The chief of staff of the army with the rank of colonel is hardly the level at which military alliances between the two states could be concluded. On July 6, in the German city of Kiel, a meeting of naval commanders was held, at which Germany was represented by Vice Admiral Schmudt, and Finland by Commodore Sundman. Neither official nor secret treaties were concluded during these meetings (at least, they were never discovered). According to the

version set out in Mannerheim's memoirs, the Finnish side then refused to take on any obligations: *"From his [Buschenhagen] statements to the General Staff, it became clear that this time his task was, on the one hand, to negotiate the practical details of a possible cooperation in the event that the USSR attacks Finland, and on the other hand, obtaining guarantees that Finland will act as an ally of Germany in the war. I informed the President of the Republic about this, and he assured that his position remains the same. After which I informed Colonel Buschenhagen that we could not give any guarantees regarding entry into the war. Finland has decided to remain neutral unless attacked" [22].* Neither confirm nor refute this version with any documentary evidence

so far failed. Nevertheless, the real course of further events clearly indicates that the parties **did not limit themselves to mutual information alone**. This conclusion is confirmed by **the redeployment of German troops to Finland, which began on June 7, 1941.**

The SS motorized brigade "Nord" was the first to cross the border between Norway and Finland. By June 6, the brigade was concentrated in the area of the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, and then along the "Arctic highway" Petsamo-Rovaniemi reached the concentration area in three days. The 169th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht during June 5–14 was transferred by sea from Germany to the Finnish port of Oulu, and from there it was transported by rail to the Rovaniemi region. The SS Nord brigade, the 169th Infantry Division and the units attached to them (including a tank battalion armed with captured French tanks) were consolidated into the 36th Army Corps (36th AK), which was to advance along the Salla-Alakurtti-Kandalaksha line. Until the morning of June 22, 1941, the 36th AK was **the only formation of German ground forces in Finland**. The only one. On the

morning of June 22, the mountain rifle corps of General Dittl (2nd and 3rd mountain rifle divisions) crossed the Norwegian border, took control of Petsamo and began advancing to the area near the Soviet-Finnish border that was the starting point for the attack on Murmansk. Thus, by June 25, 1941, there were already four German divisions in northern Finland.

**The only division of the Wehrmacht in southern Finland** (163rd Infantry) received an order to advance from the Norwegian Oslo only on June 26, 1941. Having passed through Swedish territory, the forward units of the 163rd Infantry Division crossed the Finnish border in the Tornio region only on June 28, i.e. . already **after the start of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war**. The division was stationed in Joensuu and included in the reserve of the

Finnish army

high command [65]. These are the facts. Based on these facts, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, before the turn of May-June 1941, the situation was quite multivariat

there were no binding agreements (even if secret, even if signed at the level of colonels and generals) between Germany and Finland. Secondly, and this is incomparably more significant, **the Finnish army was the main military force on the territory of Finland.** It was precisely this circumstance that was of decisive importance in the situation that developed in Europe in the second year of the World War. Two (then four) German divisions deployed in the Arctic were separated from southern Finland (i.e. from the capital of the state, the main industrial centers and 9/10 of the population) by a thousand-kilometer space, moreover, to the north of the Kem-Rovaniemi-Salla railway line among the deserted forest tundra there was only one road. There was no question of any military, forceful pressure of the Germans on the Finnish leadership in such a situation. Moreover, the entire supply of the group of German troops (from food to ammunition) rested

on communications passing through the territory controlled by the Finnish army. Local resources (in other words, village peasants, from whom food could be taken by force in an amount sufficient to provide a 50,000-strong group of troops) were absent in northern Finland. Even in the presence of an alliance (explicit or covert) with Finland, the supply of German troops in the Arctic was a huge problem. The only motor road from Rovaniemi to Petsamo was 530 km long, and the German tank trucks consumed almost as much gasoline on this route as they could transport [65]. In reality, German troops in the Arctic could only solve the task for which they were deployed: to occupy the Petsamo region with the consent of the Finnish leadership and try to capture Murmansk and Kandalaksha. There was no question of any decisive influence of this extremely small group of troops on the adoption of political decisions in Helsinki.

In this regard, Finland was (in reality, and not in connection with some paper agreements) in a qualitatively different position than Germany's Eastern European allies (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria). By June 22, 1941, the territories of these countries were either already actually occupied by the Wehrmacht, or could be occupied by German troops at any moment. The example of Yugoslavia, which at the beginning of April 1941 tried to withdraw from the Tripartite Pact, showed very clearly what Hitler's reaction would be to the very first signs of defiance.

Every medal has two sides. The fundamental fact mentioned above (the Finnish army was the main military force on the territory of Finland) testifies to at least two circumstances. On the one hand, **the decision to enter the war against the Soviet Union was made in Helsinki, and it is the Finnish leadership that is responsible for it.** In this sense, one cannot agree with the concept of "a log carried by a stream" put forward by a number of Finnish historians. It was precisely at the end of the spring of 1941, precisely at the moment when the two totalitarian dictatorships were preparing to grab each other at the throat, that Finland had a certain opportunity for political maneuver, for making independent decisions.

On the other hand, precisely because the key decisions were made not in Berlin, but in Helsinki, **the Soviet leadership had a real opportunity to reach an agreement with the Finnish government and ensure calm in the Finnish**

**border peacefully.** Molotov did not need Hitler at all as a "mediator" in negotiations with Ryti and Mannerheim. It was enough to have good will and desire. And these are by no means belated projects of an amateur. Comrade Stalin himself formulated one of the possible ways to solve the problem as follows: *"The USSR attaches great importance to the question of the neutralization of Finland and its withdrawal from Germany ... In this case, the Soviet government could make some territorial concessions to Finland in order to reconcile the latter and conclude with her a new peace treaty"* [173]. Great offer. A true example of state wisdom, which subjugates petty

considerations of personal ambitions and the notorious "image". Unfortunately, Comrade Stalin announced his readiness to "make some territorial concessions" and conclude a "new peace treaty" with Finland (in a letter to US President F. Roosevelt) only on August 4, 1941. About where the Finnish troops were on August 4, 1941 We will talk in the last Part of this book. In the meantime, let's note the main thing: on the eve of the start of the Soviet-German war in Moscow, **not the slightest attempt was made to "pacify" Finland.** As for the "friendly gestures" (such as the replacement of the ambassador in Helsinki and the generous, albeit belated, promise to resume grain deliveries), which brought Paasikivi, then ambassador to Moscow and some of today's Finnish historians, to such tenderness, the leaders of Finland, of course, do not agreed to consider this a worthy compensation for the aggression of the "winter war" and the predatory terms of the Moscow peace treaty.

In the spring of 1941, it was decided to ensure the stability of the northern flank of the common front of the Red Army not by diplomatic, but by military means. active defense. The top military and political leadership of the USSR decided that 15 rifle divisions and two mechanized corps of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) would be quite enough to *"neutralize Finland."* In fact, back in April 1940, Comrade Stalin explained to himself and his generals that "the offensive of the Finns is not worth a penny." Speaking with a closing speech at the Meeting of the top command staff of the Red Army, he said: *"... The Finnish army is very passive in defense, and it looks at the defense line of the fortified area like the Mohammedans look at Allah. Fools, they sit in pillboxes and don't come out, they think that they can't cope with the pillboxes, they sit and drink tea ... Like the offensive of the Finns, it's not worth a penny. Here are three months of fighting, do you remember at least one case of a serious mass offensive by the Finnish army? This never happened... They very rarely went on the counterattack, and I do not know of a single case where they did not fail in the counterattacks. As for any serious offensive to break through our front, to occupy some kind of line, you will not see a single such fact. The Finnish army is not capable of great offensive actions ... "*

The subordinates understood the hint. And now, in the intelligence report of the headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps (Leningrad VO), signed by the chief of staff of the corps on June 29, 1941, paragraph 8 appears, dedicated to the "political and moral state of the enemy." The state is simply depressing: *"The political and moral state of the soldiers of the Finnish army in 1940-1941. dropped sharply. There are frequent cases of violation of discipline (drunkenness, unauthorized absences, bickering, failure to follow orders, etc.), great dissatisfaction with poor nutrition and lengthening of the service life. In addition, the soldiers*



*the general difficult economic situation of the working population and the tense political situation caused by the defeat in the last war and the reactionary course of the ruling clique" [190].*

Was it worth worrying about the stability of the defense of the troops of the Leningrad District when they faced such a morally decomposed enemy? As for the possible breakthrough of German troops through the Baltic states and the line of the Ostrov-Pskov fortified areas to the southern suburbs of Leningrad, such a situation was not even discussed. *"Everyone then was firmly convinced,"* writes in his memoirs the Chief Marshal of Aviation (and at that time the commander of the Air Force of the LenVO) AA Novikov, *"that the troops of the district would have to act only on the Soviet-Finnish border, from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland. No one in those days even imagined that events would turn out very differently very soon."* In this case, Novikov's memory did not fail. During the operational-strategic game conducted by the General Staff of the Red Army in January 1941, the "Western" had the task of reaching the Western Dvina on the 30th day of the offensive. But the "Eastern", of course, did not allow them to do this either, and the "Western" did not advance further than the Kaunas-Siauliai line (and the "Western" went to this line from the borders of East Prussia for 10 days). Only in a nightmare Stalin could have imagined a situation when on the 5th day of the war the Germans crossed the Western Dvina, and on the 18th day they took Pskov ... With firm confidence in the invincible power of his army, Stalin briskly led the country to the greatest catastrophe in its history.

## **Part 3**

### **TEN DAYS OF THE SUMMER OF 41**

## Chapter

### 3.1 TUESDAY, JUNE 17

In that terrible year, June 17th fell on a Tuesday. A typical summer day. The headlines of the central Soviet newspapers breathed serenity, very close to boredom. An editorial in Izvestia entitled: "On collective farm consumer goods and local initiative." Next come the articles "Results of the implementation of the new loan" and "The trade union-Komsomol cross-country has begun." Some animation was found only on the last page. Where the impassioned appeal of the leadership of Glavkonserva was published: "Return empty glass jars and bottles!". Against the backdrop of this peaceful grace, the headlines of the second page of the issue, dedicated to the events of life abroad, looked especially contrasting: "War in Europe", "War in Syria", "War in Africa", "Bombing of Cyprus and Gibraltar", "Military measures of the United States". Each reader could thus visually appreciate the fruits of the wise, unfailingly peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Union. It was on this day, June 17, 1941, that the 1st Panzer

Division from the 1st Mechanized Corps of the Leningrad Military District, raised on combat alert, began loading into echelons leaving for the polar Alakurtti to "perform a special task" [175]. The exact text of the order (named in the report of the commander of the 1st MK *"personal order of the chief of staff of the LVO, Major General Nikishev"*), unfortunately, is unknown. This document could not be found in the archives of the 1st Mechanized Corps (f. 3422) and the 1st Panzer Division (f. 3000). Strictly speaking, the only written confirmation of the most important circumstance that the words "combat", "combat alert" were used in the order are the memoirs of the commander of the 1st Panzer Division V.I. Baranov (*"raised the day before on alert, the tankers were at the loading docks of the railway, where they put their cars on the platforms ..."*) [186]. However, in this case - as in many others - the real facts are no less eloquent than paper documents. A clear confirmation of the fact that already on June 17, 1941, the 1st Panzer began to carry out a combat mission can be a picture of

the state in which the 1st TD left its permanent deployment in the village of Strugi Krasnye near Pskov. Colonel General I.M. Golushko (in those days, a lieutenant who had just graduated from the Kiev Tank School) describes in his memoirs what he saw when he arrived at the former camp of the 1st Panzer Division: "There was no one here except for the foreman, who *introduced himself as the head of the tank fleet ... 20 units "BT-5" and "BT-7" were considered to be mothballed. I examined them and only gasped: some without gearboxes, others without batteries, some had machine guns removed ... When asked what all this meant, the foreman replied that the regiment, alerted (emphasized by me. - M.S. ) , took everything that could be put on the move..."* [187].

This is what is called: in war as in war. By peacetime standards, 20 abandoned, dismantled tanks is a crime. But the command of the 1st Panzer already on June 17, 1941 knew that peacetime for him and for the units entrusted to him was over. And this meant that loaded onto railway platforms

should not lose a single extra minute, ruthlessly dismantling the defective tanks for spare parts. The work was huge: the division had 372 tanks. 53 armored vehicles, 12 newest 152-mm guns ML-20 weighing seven tons each, 1.5 thousand vehicles for various purposes, more than 10 thousand people, hundreds of tons of fuel and ammunition. All this had to be loaded onto trains and sent to the area of the new deployment. It is difficult to say how long such a large-scale work would take in our time. Unbelievable, but true - on the night of June 19, the first echelons had already left the loading station. They arrived at Alakurtti station on the evening of June 22. The last two echelons were loaded on the afternoon of June 24 (i.e., two days after the start of the Soviet-German war) and arrived in the Arctic on June 26-27 [188] June 17, on the very day when the 1st Panzer Division received

the order to start loading to the echelons leaving for the Arctic, the command staff of the 10th mechanized corps of the Leningrad Military District left for the exercises. The corps was based in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pavlovsk, Gatchina), but the district leadership decided to conduct command and staff exercises in the north of the Karelian Isthmus, in the Vyborg region. *"The exercises were designed for five days, i.e. until 22.06 inclusive. But on June 21, at 0900, the exercise was given a retreat, and the entire command staff was sent to Vyborg to analyze the exercise. After the analysis, it was ordered to immediately leave for their units .*

Active preparations for war also took place on the farthest sector of the future "Finnish front", on the Hanko Peninsula. On the eve of the war, Senior Sergeant CB Tirkeltaub served in the communications battalion of the 8th Osb. In his memoirs, he writes: *"... On June 2, 1941, the commander of the Leningrad Military District, M.M., arrived at Khanko. Popov. In the hall of the former city government, all officers were gathered, from company commanders and older. They were informed (and this immediately became an open secret) about the possibility of an attack by Germany and Finland on the Soviet Union. On the same day, the command of the naval base announced the cancellation of vacations for military personnel and other relevant measures ... On the morning of June 19, another combat alarm sounded in the battalion, this time it turned out to be not a training one at all ... We were put on cars and sent to the line of defense. We never returned to our barracks on Hanko. The order immediately followed to lay out the telephone lines and begin duty. On the morning of June 20, the foreman handed out live ammunition and grenades. This has never happened before ... At the first hour of the night on June 22, sirens howled throughout the peninsula, tanks and trucks rumbled. Phones that had been silent for three days woke up. Signalers transmitted reports to the headquarters: such and such a battalion occupied the line of defense, such and such a company took up its starting position ...*

*" [189]. The memoirs of the sergeant basically coincide with the memoirs of the most important chief for the Hanko naval base - People's Commissar of the Navy of the USSR Admiral N.G. Kuznetsova. Referring, however, to the story of the naval commander Khanko S.I. Kabanov, Admiral Kuznetsov writes: "Late on the evening of June 19, the Soviet plenipotentiary in Finland S.I. arrived across the border in Hanko. Zotov.*

*He said that we should expect the outbreak of war with Germany and Finland, and that two Nazi divisions were already unloading in the port of Turku. Without declaring an alarm, I ordered the 335th Rifle Regiment and one battalion of the 343rd Artillery Regiment to be raised, and these units, before dawn, quietly take up a combat sector and firing positions at the line of land defense. During the 20th and on the night of June 21, all the forces of the base, by order of the Military Council, were brought to full combat readiness.*

*On June 20, the diesel-electric ship "Iosif Stalin" arrived in Hanko from Leningrad, which, according to the schedule, was supposed to leave on the same day on the return flight. The complexity of the situation forced the diesel-electric ship to be delayed. On the first day of the war with Germany (in fact, loading began on June 21, but the ship left the shore at 18:00 on June 22. - M.S.) about 6,000 women and children were evacuated from Hanko to*

*Tallinn" [192]. In the above text there is one very strange detail: "The Soviet plenipotentiary in Finland S.I. arrived across the border in Hanko. Zotov. Firstly, S.I. Zotov, two months before the events described, ceased to be plenipotentiary and was recalled from Helsinki. Secondly, since when did employees of the diplomatic department (and even crossing the border!) transmit operational information to military and naval commanders? For many months of the existence of the Hanko naval base, stable radio contact was maintained with it. In extreme cases, for the personal transfer of top-secret information, it was possible to send a messenger on a warship (2-3 hours of travel) or on an airplane (20 minutes of flight). There was an airfield on Hanko, and two squadrons of the 13th Fighter Aviation Regiment of the KBF Air Force were based there. True, in modern publications there are reports that everything was much simpler, and the "feat of a scout" had a completely ordinary reason: "Orlov and the military attaché of the USSR in Finland, Captain 2nd Rank Taradin, took away their families". In any case, the command of the*

Hanko naval base did not learn about the imminent start of the war from the "plenipotentiary representative" running across the border. It was on that day, June 19, 1941, that it was Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov ordered the transfer of the Baltic, Northern and Black Sea fleets to the "Operational Readiness No. 2" mode.

The specific content of the activities carried out in the "Operational readiness No. 2" mode was determined as early as June 23, 1939 by the directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy No. 9760 On this command, the fleet passed into the following state:

*"- the combat core of the fleet in 4-hour readiness for going to sea: - the composition of the fleet in peacetime in 6-hour readiness for entry into hostilities;*

*- repair of ships is being accelerated; - patrol is carried out at all bases and systematic aerial reconnaissance is carried out at sea; - aviation is dispersed at operational airfields" [106].* The most amazing details of the last peaceful days are found in the memoirs of the commander of the Leningrad district, M.M. Popov. First of all, it should be noted that we may incorrectly indicate the position of Lieutenant General M.M. Popov. Was he still the commander of the Leningrad Military District on June 20, 1941, or was he already the Northern Front? The exact answer to this question is very important. Fronts in the Soviet Union were never created in peacetime (the Far Eastern Front deployed since the late 1930s can only serve as an example of an "exception that proves the rule", the border with Japan-occupied China continuously flared up either large or small armed conflicts). The deployment of fronts near the western borders of the USSR always preceded the imminent start of hostilities. So it was in September 1939 (before the invasion of Poland), and in January 1940 (at the beginning of the second phase of the "winter war"), and in June 1940 (on the eve of the "liberation" of Bessarabia and Bukovina).

The date of the creation of the Northern Front (June 24, 1941) adopted in Soviet historiography is a clear disinformation. Stored in TsAMO (f. 217, op. 1221, d. 183, l. 1) "Operative report No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front" was **signed at 22.00 on June 22, 1941**. It is possible that this time line (the evening of June 22) is not the exact designation of the moment of the transformation of the Leningrad Military District into the Northern Front. For more than 15 years, it has been known for certain that on June 19–21, 1941, fronts were described in secret documents as real units. So, in a telegram from the Chief of the General Staff dated June 19, 1941, to the commander of the Kiev OVO, it was said: *"The People's Commissar of Defense ordered: by June 22, 1941, the department should go to Ternopil, leaving the district department subordinate to you in Kiev ... Separation and transfer of the **front management** ( emphasized by me. - M.S.) to keep in the strictest confidence, about which to warn the personnel of the district headquarters "* [164]. Another noteworthy document was drawn up in the neighboring Baltic district of Leningradsky at 14:30. June 21, 1941. It sets the task *"beginning tonight until further notice to introduce blackout in garrisons and troop locations."* There would be nothing surprising in this if it were not for the signature: *"Assistant Commander of the Troops **S.Z.f. Air Defense Colonel Karlin**"* [193]. The earliest known mention of the words "Northern Front" is found in the text of the draft decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All - Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated June 21, 1941 , written by Malenkov (Secretary of the Central

Committee, member of the Main Military Council) on June 21, 1941 : *in place ... Appoint Comrade Kuznetsov as a member of the Military Council **of the Northern Front** ... "* [121]. In these troubled days. when military leaders "from company commanders and older" already guessed about the imminent start of the war, Lieutenant General M.M. Popov, with a group of senior officers of the district, left Leningrad for the Arctic.

For what? If you believe the memoirs of General Popov written in 1964 and published in 1968, then here's why: *"In the tenth of June, a directive from the People's Commissar of Defense was received, which appointed a large commission chaired by the commander of the Leningrad Military District with the task of selecting sites for construction of airfields for basing fighter and bomber aircraft along the shores of the Barents Sea"* [194]. It's hard to believe this. More precisely, it is impossible. The commander of the troops of the district (and not a

simple district, but a district preparing to turn into an active front), the general, who was allowed to participate in the most secret Conference of the top command staff of the Red Army in Stalin's office on May 24, 1941, had many other things to do and concerns, besides in order to personally select suitable "sites for the construction of airfields" in the deserted tundra of the Kola Peninsula. Moreover, if, again, to believe the memoirs of M.M. Popov, the expedition was supposed to last a whole month! And this is not a joke: *"By the end of our meeting, A.G. Golovko (commander of the Northern Fleet) reported that the destroyer assigned to the commission for the selection of airfields on which I was supposed to go was ready to go to sea, and offered to clarify the time of this exit. The soul did not lie, as they say, for this parting with land for almost a month. However, it was, of course, not to fulfill the directives of the People's Commissar*



It is completely incomprehensible where, in what seas, the "destroyer assigned to the commission for the selection of airfields" was supposed to go. For "almost a month's time" it was possible to reach Alaska and return. If it was about the "shores of the Barents Sea", i.e. about the transition from Murmansk to the northeastern tip of the Kola Peninsula, then for the destroyer (at an average speed of 20 knots) there is a move for one day ... Further events

(and the meeting of M.M. Popov with Rear Admiral A.G. Golovko took place on 20 June) developed as follows: *"... After some deliberation, it was found reasonable to report our moods by telephone. And here is the Commissar on the wire. A short report on the situation on the land border, at sea and in the air, and a frank statement that under these conditions going to sea is inappropriate. "It's good that I called," the voice of the people's commissar*

*sounded in the receiver. - Let's put off going to sea for now. Return to Leningrad immediately."* The army commander (commander of the 14th Army, Lieutenant General V.A. Frolov), *who were present at this conversation with the People's Commissar of the Navy, will see some confirmation in the cancellation of going to sea*  
*our fears..."*

Strange. In the Northern Fleet, operational readiness No. 2 was announced on June 19 at 17.00. This could (and should have) "confirmed the fears" to a much greater extent. The order of command at the level of People's Commissar of Defense looks a little strange - the commander of one of the five border districts (or already fronts). "I'm glad you called." Fine. What if he didn't call? So would the commander sail away on a sea cruise for a month?

In Murmansk, after discussing the situation with the commander of the 14th Army, M.M. Popov made a decision, the meaning of which is categorically impossible to translate into Russian:

*"We considered it absolutely necessary to extend our decision on the transition to the defense of troops in the Kandalaksha direction and to the troops intended to cover and defend the Murmansk direction and the coasts of the Rybachy and Kola peninsulas, which the commander very much asked for and for which he was given permission."*

What does it mean? Firstly, it reports on the decision *"on the transition to the defense of troops in the Kandalaksha direction."* And earlier, BEFORE the decision "on the transition to defense" was made, what other task did the "troops in the Kandalaksha direction" have? And if the decision "on the transition to the defensive" was indeed made (and some other decision with other tasks was canceled?), then why is it at these hours that the 1st Panzer Division, on the orders of the district command, begins a hasty redeployment from Pskov to Alakurti? Further. If the troops of the 14th Army were intended *"to cover and defend the Murmansk direction"*, then why did the commander have to "really ask" for permission to move to ... defense?

The return to Leningrad, described in M.M. Popov's memoirs, also raises many questions: *"I returned to Leningrad by the Polar Arrow train. The day of June 21, spent in the car, passed quietly. In Petrozavodsk, where*

*we arrived at about **4 a.m. on June 22** (hereinafter, it is underlined by me. - M.S.), in addition to the army commander (commander of the 7th Army), Lieutenant General F.D. Gorelenko, they also met **the secretary of the Central Committee of the Karelian-Finnish SSR** and the head of the Kirov railway. First of all they*

reported on the order received from Moscow: **unhook the commander's car from the train** and deliver it non-stop to Leningrad outside the schedule, for which a separate steam locomotive should be allocated. This locomotive is already ready, and in a few minutes you can go. The order for

the urgent delivery of the commander's car to Leningrad, naturally, aroused concern and alertness in them. However, at that hour and in those minutes, **we could only assume that some events were brewing**, undoubtedly connected with the war. We could not explain anything to our comrades, and since the shunting locomotive was already pulling the car along the station tracks, we had to hastily tell about the situation and decisions taken in the north, i.e., in the sector of the 14th Army, and suggest to Commander F.D. Gorelenko, in whose sector the Finnish units had already been advanced to the border, urgently put the troops on combat readiness and occupy them with defenses according to the cover plan.

Corps Commissar Klementyev, a member of the Military Council, and I **racked our brains over** what this order to urgently deliver us to Leningrad meant ... . The commandant, who appeared in the car with a gas mask on his left side, a symbol of combat readiness, introduced himself and reported that the stop was due to the need to check the axle boxes and would be very short, and then it was planned to follow to Leningrad without a single stop. But most importantly, he continued with noticeable excitement, about an hour ago, by intercom from Leningrad, **only for the information of the head of the station and the commandant**, a message was transmitted that the Germans had bombed a number of our cities and railway junctions in the west at about 4 o'clock in the morning and, after heavy artillery shelling, crossed border and invaded our territory..."

So, at 4 o'clock in the morning on June 22, 1941, the commander of the Leningrad District (already referred to in the documents of the supreme command as the "Northern Front") and the commander of one of the three armies of the front (F.D. Gorelenko) are still only "puzzling their heads" about that "some events are brewing." At the same time, for some reason, the commander does not sleep at 4 o'clock in the morning (for people leading a normal lifestyle, this is night). Comrade Kupriyanov, the secretary of the Karelian-Finnish Central Committee, does not sleep either, although for him the commander of the district is not a senior boss and Kupriyanov is absolutely not obliged to meet him at the train station. Further, at 7 am on June 22, the commander still does not have any reliable information about the war that began three hours ago and learns about it from the "commandant with a gas mask on his side." Moreover, the commandant of some tiny station has already been informed about the beginning of the war. Hour ago. And there is no commander of the district (front) yet.

Could all this be true? No, he can not. The famous Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 1 ("During June 22–23, 1941, a surprise attack by the Germans on the fronts of the LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO ...") was received at the headquarters of the Leningrad District at one in the morning on June 22, 1941 and was immediately brought to the attention of the commanders of the armies and corps. There are many proofs of this fact. Today it is already possible to specify exact archival references to documents. But we will not do this, but simply continue reading the memoirs of M.M. Popova: "On the morning of June 22, we returned to Leningrad ... General K.P. Pyadyshev immediately in the car briefly outlined the situation. **Received** around 1 am

***directive of the People's Commissar, warning that on June 22-23 an attack by Nazi troops on our country is possible. The directive required that the troops be put on alert and take up firing points in fortified areas on the state border. The district headquarters was immediately assembled on alert, and appropriate instructions were sent to the troops ...*** " Thus, even if we

assume such a blatant sloppiness as the absence of radio communications and encryption devices in the district commander's car, then at least at 4 o'clock in the morning, after meeting with the commander of the 7th Army, General Gorelenko, Popov was supposed to learn from him the content of Directive No. 1. After that, there was absolutely no need to puzzle over conjectures.

The reader carefully trained by Soviet writers, of course, "knows" that there was no radio communication in the Red Army, "history gave us little time", and commands in the army were transmitted by flags, signal fires, tom-toms, at best - by wired telephone. Alas, the documents and facts do not confirm the bold hypothesis that Stalin organized the production of aircraft, tanks, guns, armored vehicles, tractors, mortars (and in cyclopean quantities), but he forgot about radio communications. As of January 1, 1941, the Armed Forces of the USSR included:

- front-line radio stations (PAT) - 40 pieces (an average of **8 for each of the five future fronts**); -

- army and corps (RAF, RSB) - 1613 pieces (an average of **18 for each rifle and mechanized corps**);

- regimental (5AK) - 5909 pieces (an average of **4 for each regiment**)

[121]. Total - 7566 radio stations of all types. Of course, this number did not include tank and aircraft radio stations. And that's all - on January 1, 1941. Soviet radio factories continued their "peaceful creative work", and by June 22 there should have been even more radio communications. At least the 1941 plan provided for the release of 33 PAT 940 RSB and RAF, 1000 5AK. In the memorandum cited above, the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, unfortunately, does not contain data on the presence of the predecessor of the RAF - a powerful (500 W) radio station 11-AK, although there were a lot of these complexes in the troops. So. in the Kiev OVO as of May 10, 1941, there were 5 PAT complexes, 6 - RAF. 97 - RSB and 126 units of 11-AK. And another 1012 regimental 5AK [121]. Now it's worth

explaining what all these capital letters mean. The RSB radio station was standardly installed on the chassis of a car, had a radiated power of up to 50 W and provided a telephone communication range of 300 km, i.e. in fact, in the zone of action of the army or even the front. RAF is a much more powerful (400-500 W) set of equipment installed on two ZIS-5 trucks. The PAT front-line radio communication complex could be considered a true miracle of technology in the 40s. Huge power (1.2 kW) made it possible to provide telephone communication at a distance of 600 km, and telegraph - up to 2000 km. The transmitter circuit provided the ability to work on 381 fixed communication channels with automatic frequency control. So our assumption that only because of the extreme sloppiness in the car of the commander of one of the five border districts there might not have been a powerful radio station and one of the 247 available BODO encrypted communication devices is quite justified ...

Let us return, however, together with General Popov to Leningrad: "... On Nevsky Prospekt, along which we were driving to the headquarters of the district, the usual revival reigned in these Sunday hours. There was no official announcement of the outbreak of war yet... General of the Army Meretskov was at the headquarters of the district, who **arrived in the morning** (underlined by me. - M.S.) as a representative of the people's commissar... Arriving at the headquarters, I immediately went to the office of the chief of staff of the district, General D.N. . Nikisheva, where he found K.A. Meretskov, who was talking to someone on the phone ... Having outlined with D.N. Nikishev's work plan for the next few hours, K.A. and I Meretskov went down to my office in order to sort out in all details the situation on the Finnish border..." [19].

According to what is written, Popov saw Meretskov at the headquarters of the district (front) on the morning of **June 22**, no later than 12 noon ("the announcement of the outbreak of war - that is, Molotov's speech on the radio - had not yet been made"). And he didn't just "see", but talked with Meretskov, discussed plans for priority measures with him ... But K.A. For some reason, Meretskov categorically does not remember this: "... On the afternoon of June 22, I turned on the radio and heard the speech of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V.M. Molotov about the villainous attack of fascist Germany on our country. Now my companions, General P.P. Eternal and errand officer Lieutenant S.A. Panov, received an answer to the question why we are going to Leningrad.

Arriving in Leningrad, I immediately went to the headquarters of the district. I was greeted with joy, everyone wanted to hear the living word of the representative of Moscow, to receive an oral order. On the spot were Major General D.N. Nikishev and corps commissar HH Klementiev ... Commander of the troops of the district M.M. At the beginning of the war, Popov was inspecting some of the formations of the district ... The headquarters of the district worked with maximum load. The night was restless. I was informed that on June 23, the commander of the troops of the district, M.M., would arrive in Leningrad from Murmansk. Popov... The morning of the second day of the war came. I received an urgent call to Moscow" [93].

So, from Meretskov's memoirs it follows that he arrived in Leningrad after Molotov's speech on the radio, i.e. after 12 noon. He did not meet the commander of the district either during the day, or in the evenings, or in general during the entire short time of his stay in Leningrad. And what is already quite strange - Klementyev (the PMC of the district, who was returning from Murmansk - according to Popov - in the same car with him) according to Meretskov, was already in Leningrad on the afternoon of June 22. What was it? Lieutenant General Popov fell behind

the train? We will return to the mysterious and tragic story of Meretskov's trip to Leningrad. In the meantime, we note the only thing that can be said with good reason: to tell the truth about the last pre-war days of M.M. Popov and K.A. Meretskov refused. Or (which is even more likely) they were denied this right by "litconsultants".

On June 17, 1941, the most important events took place on the other side of the future front. On this day, general mobilization began in Finland. The adoption of such a decision was preceded by remarkable events that sufficiently characterize the degree of mutual distrust of the future allies (Finland and Germany).

As you know, the Nazi leadership developed (and very successfully implemented) a complex, multi-level disinformation scheme that was supposed to cover up the strategic deployment of the Wehrmacht for the war with the Soviet Union. One element of this disinformation campaign was the spread of rumors about

allegedly ongoing (or being prepared) negotiations between the top leadership of Germany and the USSR, during which the German side in an ultimatum form will demand big concessions from the USSR, up to the "lease of Ukraine". These rumors, spread through diplomatic and intelligence channels, were supposed, on the one hand, to "explain" the concentration of German troops near the borders with the USSR as an element of psychological pressure on Moscow, on the other hand, to dull the vigilance of the Soviet leadership, which was asked to expect an ultimatum (which reality never came out.) The confusion of minds was intensified by the famous TASS Statement of June 13, 1941, which, in particular, stated: *"Germany did not present any claims to the USSR and does not propose any new, closer agreement, which is why negotiations on this subject could not have places."* In a situation created by the joint efforts of the German, Soviet and British secret services, when no one believed anything. The TASS statement in many government offices was perceived as a covert invitation from Berlin to negotiations. The Finnish leadership was also included in the list of misinformed subjects. Mannerheim

writes in his memoirs: *"In mid-May, the German Foreign Office asked what wishes Finland had in order to take them into account in the process of negotiations that are being conducted with the Soviet government and which are expected to lead to a peaceful defusing of the existing tension. ... However, a little time passed, and we were forced to state that information about the negotiations was taken from the ceiling and that the whole story was pure bluff"* [22]. At the beginning of June 1941, fears intensified in Helsinki that Germany and the USSR would nevertheless come to an agreement among themselves: behind the back of Finland,

and perhaps at the expense of Finland. It seemed quite probable that Hitler, as part of a new big agreement with Stalin, would give the latter "carte blanche" to occupy Finland, or two dictators would agree on an "amicable" division of Finland (just as in real history in the fall of 1939 they divided Poland). In such an extremely uncertain environment, the Finnish leadership did not want to start a full-scale mobilization (which the Soviet leadership could rightly consider as a hostile act) before receiving specific clarifications from the Germans on the situation.

The exact text of the Finnish request (transmitted to Berlin via Buschenhagen) is unknown. In general terms, the versions of various historians boil down to the fact that Finland wanted either an accurate message that a war between Germany and the USSR was imminent, or a guarantee that during political negotiations Moscow and Berlin would not conclude a new deal at the expense of Finland's interests. The answer was received on June 15 in the form of Keitel's telegram to Colonel Buschenhagen, in which the latter was instructed to inform the Finns that *"the requirements and conditions put forward by Finland regarding the adoption of appropriate measures can be considered feasible"* [65]. It is unlikely that this ornate and rather vague phrase can be considered an "agreement on the attack on the Soviet Union." And yet, even Professor M. Jokipii (on the selective citation of the fundamental work of which our domestic "denunciators of the Finnish military" parasitize) was forced to admit that *"along with oral agreements, this was the only document on which*

*President Ryti could refer when a deputation from four parties on June 21, 1941 tried to find out from him what the guarantees of German assistance were" [26]. How*

*"active" was the Finnish defense planned? Mannerheim claims that the operational plans of the Finnish army were initially purely defensive: "We had only one war plan, and it was defensive. The grouping of troops, according to this plan, was created exclusively for the performance of defensive tasks. The assertion that Finland was supposedly preparing to conduct offensive operations is not true. The fact that we made our first offensive attempt in the area north of Lake Ladoga three weeks after the start of the war, and moved on to the next offensive actions in order to liberate Vyborg and the Karelian Isthmus three weeks later, just indicates that we needed to regroup troops for the offensive" [22].*

At the same time, the 3rd Army Corps of the Finnish Army (6th Infantry Division in the Kusamo area and 3rd Infantry Division north of Suomussalmi), under the command of the hero of the "winter war" General Siilasvuo, already on June 15 was transferred to the operational subordination of the headquarters of the army "Norway", which indicates a clear readiness to take part in the German attack on Kandalaksha. The order for the army "Norway", signed on June 22, 1941, demanded that the offensive of the 36th German and 3rd Finnish corps begin on July 1, 1941 [65]. Today it is already known that even at the stage of the June meetings of the Finnish and German generals, a decision was made to divide the areas of responsibility approximately along the 65th parallel, passing through Oulu and Suomussalmi. To the north of this line, all troops were subordinate to the headquarters of the German army "Norway", to the south - to the Finnish commander in chief.

The operational plan of the Finnish army "Karelia" (five infantry divisions, two chasseurs and one cavalry brigades), which actually launched an offensive along the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga on July 10, was signed (and brought to the attention of the German command) on June 28, 1941, i. e. **already after the Soviet bombardments** on June 25-26 and after the formal entry of Finland into the war [65]. On the other hand, it is not difficult to guess that work on the plan for a large-scale offensive did not begin 3 days before it was signed... In the presentation of M. Jokipii, the events unfolded as follows: "... The *initial defensive plans of Finland, tied mainly to the strip from the Vyborg Bay to Lake Saimaa*, began in June 1941 to gradually acquire an offensive character. This can be seen from the redeployment of some units north of Lake Ladoga. With the beginning of mobilization, the General Staff issued a series of orders on June 18, in which, along with the tasks of defense, set out briefly and in passing, broad and precise offensive goals (the so-called alternative plans) were set ... From the Salpa defensive line to the reserve of forces advancing on Sortavala and Hiitola, 5, 15 and 19 divisions were transferred ... "

All this does not sound very convincing. It is not clear why the "precise offensive goals" are presented in the form of some kind of "alternative plans". There is no clear answer to the question of who and when should have chosen one of several "alternatives" in the version of M. Jokipii? The defense of Finland's maritime

borders was also planned to be no less active. Since the naval theme is beyond the competence of the author of this book, we confine ourselves to a detailed quotation of the work of a specialist: *"On the naval forces*



*Finland was entrusted with two main tasks - ensuring its navigation in the northern part of the Baltic Sea, as well as conducting active operations on the messages of the Soviet fleet in the Gulf of Finland and in the region of the Aland Islands.*

*The Finnish command intended to achieve the first task by introducing convoys, capturing the Aland Islands and the Soviet Hanko naval base, creating mine and artillery positions in the area of the Aland Islands and on the approaches to the skerry communications of the Gulf of Finland, organizing patrols and minesweeping in these areas. All this was to exclude the penetration of our ships, especially submarines, into the Gulf of Bothnia.*

*The second task was planned to be accomplished by destroying ships and vessels with submarines and boats, as well as by laying active minefields. The Finnish command planned to put 79 active and defensive minefields with a total number of 1898 mines, which was about 80% of their total stock. Of this number, in the first two days after the start of hostilities, it was planned to set up 38 barriers in the Gulf of Finland and in the area of the Aland Islands - a total of 1002 mines, on the third day - four barriers, 170 mines, and the rest - by special order. **Mine weapons were preferred to be used mainly for defensive purposes to create mine and artillery positions** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). To cover the coast, it was planned to place minefields with a high density, and within the radius of the most effective action of the fire of their coastal artillery - with a small one " [106].*

The areas of responsibility of the navies were divided along the 26th meridian (about 70 km east of the Helsinki-Tallinn line), namely: the Finnish fleet operates to the east of the meridian, and the German fleet to the west.

From this decision, in particular, it follows that a powerful line of minefields at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, which tightly closed the exit of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet to the Baltic, was very beneficial for the Germans - they got rid of the threat of the appearance of an enemy fleet near German cities and the sides of the Baltic Sea. This left the Finns face to face with the huge Soviet fleet (only two battleships, the Marat and the October Revolution, had 24 long-range 305-mm guns on board). And only the absolute helplessness of the command of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet saved the southern coast of Finland from being destroyed by the fire

of naval guns in the future ... To mine the exits from the Gulf of Finland, the Germans in the period from June 12 to 19 relocated to the skerries of the Finnish coast in the areas of Turku and Porkkala-

Udd detachment of light

ships. It consisted of: -

6 minelayers; - 18 torpedo boats; - 12 boat minesweepers (this term means the smallest of the th minesweepers), as well as 4 tugs and several auxiliary vessels.

In addition to torpedo boats and one minelayer (Brummer, which was listed as part of the Norwegian Navy under the name Albatross before being captured by the Germans), all ships were converted ships of the cargo and passenger fleet. With such forces, the Germans began (and successfully completed for them) an operation to block the Baltic Fleet (already transferred from June 19 to Operational Readiness No. 2), and literally in the area of \u200b\u200bits main base (Tallinn).

*"On June 16-19, 1941, a detachment of ships of the German fleet, intended for operations from Finnish naval bases, arrived in Helsinki and Turku. The commanders of the German and Finnish forces **acted independently and were not subordinate to each other** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). Interaction to achieve a single operational goal was ensured by their agreement among themselves. Based on the agreed decisions of their commanders, the headquarters developed the relevant operational documents. They were exchanged only on issues related to the safety of navigation (the boundaries of mined areas, identification signals, navigation marks, etc.).*

*Minelayers received an order for final preparation for hostilities on June 19, and on June 21 a prearranged signal came to conduct an active minefield operation. The laying of mines began at 23.30 June 21.*

*A group of minelayers "Nord" (three minelayers), guarded by 6 boat minesweepers and 4 torpedo boats, set up barriers between Bengtscher Island and Cape Tahkuna (Khiuma Island) in several steps. Following this, in the conditions of a bright white night, the German ships passed only 3.5 km from the coast of Khium Island to the northeast to continue minelaying. At 02.21 they were attacked by machine-gun fire from two Soviet aircraft. The German ships opened fire to no avail, but one flying boat continued to pursue the formation ... At 03.00, the formation entered the Finnish skerries and stood at a new, well-camouflaged anchorage. The mine group "Cobra" (three minelayers),*

*guarded by 5 boat minesweepers and 6 torpedo boats, set up barriers to the north of Cape Pakrinem ... During the laying of mines, Soviet coastal observation posts several times requested German ships with light in Morse code. They did not answer, but the Kaiser lit the anchor lights. In view of the movement of Soviet ships, the barriers were set up with some deviation from the original plan, after which the German ships returned to the skerries of Finland without any interference ... Further, mine laying continued every night. In particular. On June 24,*

*the laying of bottom mines north of the Tahkun lighthouse blocked the passage that was still free for large ships along the northern coast of Khiuma (Dago) Island. having spent a total of 1060 anchor shock and about 160 bottom non-contact ... mines" [106].*

The lighthouses, islands and capes mentioned above, if you mark them on a geographical map, line up in several lines of minefields crossing the entrance to the Gulf of Finland in a meridional (from north to south) direction, approximately in the strip from Hanko - Khiuma Island to Porkalla - Tallinn. The night attack by two Soviet aircraft mentioned in the logbooks of German ships is also confirmed by Soviet sources. So, Admiral V.F. Tributs (during the war years - the commander of the KBF) writes in his memoirs: "... at 3 hours 30 minutes, Senior Lieutenant Trunov and Lieutenant Puchkov from the 44th Aviation Squadron, conducting reconnaissance on MBR-2 aircraft, discovered unknown ships maneuvering in the Gulf of Finland. Having dropped to 600 meters, the planes headed for them, but were met by anti-aircraft fire. As it turned out later, these were enemy surface ships that were laying mines" [195].

The apparent difference in time is due to the fact that the Germans made notes in the ship's log according to Berlin time, one hour different from Moscow.

With the laying of their own minefields at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Fleet lagged behind the enemy by about one day. Of course, he lagged behind not from an excess of peacefulness and not from the notorious "trust in the non-aggression pact signed by the Germans." The command of the fleet raised the question of the immediate start of mine laying as early as June 19, but no permission was received from Moscow. About this, almost in the same terms, they write in their memoirs and the former People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov, and the former chief of staff of the KBF Yu.A. Panteleev: *"... I remember that the Baltics asked for this (to start mine laying. - M.S.) even earlier, when they switched to readiness No. 2, that is, on June 19. But I could not allow this - it was beyond my rights. Therefore, in the Baltic, this order was received at 06:30 on June 22 ... Then an additional order was given: "Put mines around the clock, use everything you can: destroyers and other ships." I remember L.M. Galler personally called Tallinn and asked to expedite this operation: after all, several thousand mines had to be set up ... "* [192].

*"... Some time later, I talked on HF with the Deputy People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral L.M. Galler.*

*- Comrade Panteleev! It is necessary to take all measures for the rapid laying of minefields ... Please report this to the commander of the*

*fleet. - Eat! I will report! - I said and could not restrain myself: - Lev Mikhailovich, how many times have we asked permission to start mine productions! But we were refused. And now they are rushing from all sides, as if we ourselves do not*

*understand anything ... Galler interrupted me: - Listen, my dear, we will not go into details now. This is later, but now I earnestly ask you to report to the commander of the fleet*

*and act faster ... "* [238]. Action began quickly and decisively. On the same day, June 22, 1941, the command of the Baltic Fleet issued the following order to the commander of the 2nd submarine brigade: *"1. The enemy uses the Baltic Sea for his military transportation; enemy warships appeared in the southwestern waters of Finland. Information about mine laying is available only in the area of the Glotov bank.*

*2. Your task: by deploying boats in the middle and northern parts, **sink all enemy ships by the right of unlimited submarine warfare** (emphasized by me. - M.S.)*

*"* [247]. It remains only to note that the state affiliation of the "enemy ships", which were to be "sunked by the right of unlimited submarine warfare," was not indicated in this order.

## Chapter 3.2

### "THE GERMANS STARTED ACTION..."

*"To the commanders of the 14th, 7th and 23rd armies, the commanders of the 19th SC and 50th SC. At dawn on June 22, the Germans began bombing Sevastopol, Libava, and Vindava. Combat operations began [in] the Kristynopol region of the Kiev military district and the borders of the Baltic OVO. The Germans started the fighting..." [196].*

With this directive of the Military Council for the troops of the Leningrad District, the war began. It is noteworthy that a fact that is completely obvious to the modern reader ("the Germans started the hostilities") was not so ordinary for contemporaries of the events. Apparently, therefore, the District Armed Forces considered it necessary to specifically emphasize it ...

In the first days of the war, the troops of the Leningrad District found themselves in a special position. They were separated from the Germans who started hostilities by a 400-kilometer strip of territory that was in the zone of responsibility of the Baltic OVO. This circumstance made it possible to carry out the mobilization and operational deployment of the Northern Front in a planned, "regular" mode. At 10.45 on June 22, an order of the same content was sent to the army headquarters, which the armies of the Baltic, Western, Kiev districts had not waited for before the artillery cannonade on the border: "Introduce the cover plan immediately. "All plans to cover the mobilization and deployment of border districts (including the plan to cover the LenVO) **assumed active aviation operations in the adjacent territory**. But since on the morning of June 22 the question of the method and scale of conducting "active defense" on the Finnish border had not yet been resolved, the following phrase followed the request to put the cover plan into effect: "Do not cross or fly over the border *until special instructions*" [197]. Encountering no armed opposition, the troops of the district (front) acted

quite coherent and clear.

Operations report No. 01 of the headquarters of the 23rd Army reports that by 19.40 on June 22, the army rifle corps (19th SC and 50th SC) *"occupied the cover area according to the plan"* [198]. At 22.00 on June 22, operations report No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front was signed: *"The troops of the Northern Front occupy their areas [according to] the cover plan and began to mobilize according to MP-41 (mobilization plan of the 41st year. - M.S.) ... 1st td follows the railway to the station. Alakurtti, two echelons arrived by 20.00... Hanko Peninsula. Parts in combat readiness. Families of military personnel are evacuated on June 22 at 18.00 by the ship "Joseph Stalin"... There were no violations of the border by ground units during the day at the front of the 7th and 23rd armies"* [199].

On the same day, June 22, the main strike formations of the Northern Front also set in motion: the 1st and 10th mechanized corps. The first combat order (without a number, written by hand) was the commander of the 10th MK, Major General I.G. Lazarev gave at 8.50 on June 22: *"Raise the units and put them on alert. Be ready to go."* [200]. The next order of the same day (without a number and without specifying the exact time): *"After the expiration of the combat readiness of the units on the night of 23.6.41, prepare for the performance. Approximately the district of k-khi [kirch] Heinioki"* [201]. It is strange, but this order also contains an instruction: *"Do not issue firearms on hand."*

But already at 23.10 on June 22, the corps commander ordered *"to equip the combat vehicles with the prescribed ammunition. Hand over to the shooters."*

By the evening of June 23, formations of the 10th MK (21st and 24th tank divisions. 198th motorized division) left the pre-war deployment points and concentrated on the southern outskirts of Leningrad. On the night of June 23-24, a huge, rumbling and fairly smoking "iron stream" of the 10th mechanized corps (as of June 1, 1941, the corps had 469 serviceable tanks, 86 armored vehicles, 34 tracked tractors, 1090 vehicles, 450 motorcycles) passed through Leningrad to the north towards Vyborg [202]. The divisions of the corps had the task of reaching the area of st. Kämärä, Heinioki village, Muola village, st. Tali (see card number 6).

At the headquarters of the 1st mechanized corps, the first combat order (b / n) was received at 10.50 on June 22: *"Komvoyskami ordered the 3rd TD and 163rd Motor Rifle Division to be raised and prepared for action. The performance time and route will be given additionally"* [203]. At 14.15 on June 22, the corps commander, Major General M.L. Chernyavsky gave combat order No. 1: *"To the commanders of the 3rd TD, 163rd Motor Rifle Division, 5th MCP (motorcycle regiment). Prepare units for full combat readiness. Disperse parts in sheltered places of their camps and take all security measures. The readiness for performance is constant..."* [204]. Finally. at 22.11 on June 22, the divisions of the 1st mechanized corps received an order to immediately begin a march along the Pskov-Luga-Krasnogvardeisk (Gatchina) route and, by the morning of June 24, concentrate in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pulkovo). All this fully corresponded to all known pre-war plans, according to which the 1st MK, as the main reserve of the front command,

was concentrated south of Leningrad. However, a close acquaintance with the original documents reveals something new. Thus, the combat order (w / n) for the advancement of the 163rd motorized division, signed by the commander of the 1st MK at 22.05 on June 22, is printed on the reverse side of the topographic map [205]. Perhaps at the headquarters of the corps there was no blank sheet of writing paper at that time, and the time was already counting hours and minutes. For the first day of the war, which began by no means according to the plans of the Soviet command, there is nothing surprising in this. Something else is noteworthy: at the headquarters of the mechanized corps stationed in the Pskov region. "at hand" was not a topographic map of the Pskov region, and not a map of neighboring Latvia, and not even a map of enemy Germany, but **a topographic map of ... Finland**. The 163rd MD was provided with these cards in abundance. On the reverse side of the sheets of the topographic map of southern Finland, an order was printed on passwords and recalls for June 24 [206], an order from the division commander to strengthen the reconnaissance battalion with a platoon of BT-5 tanks

dated 24.00 on June 24 [207], a memorandum on the circumstances of the accident of the BA-20 armored vehicle "Dated June 26 ... Violating the chronology of the presentation of events, we immediately note that the 163rd MD never got to the front of the war with the "White Finns". On June 30, 1941, due to the catastrophic situation that developed in the North-Western Front after the Germans forced the Western Dvina (Daugava), the 1st mechanized corps was expelled from the Northern Front and transferred to a new (and in fact - old, original) the area of Pskov - Ostrov, towards the advancing units of the 4th Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht. For a war against the Nazi invaders on their

became a dangerous "material evidence". Therefore, on June 29, the head of the operational department of the headquarters of the Northern Front, Major General Tikhomirov, gives the following order to the chief of staff of the 1st mechanized corps, Colonel Limarenko: *"Do not take the maps available in the corps with you. Send one car 1.5 tons for new sets of maps"* [208].

Having received this instruction, Colonel Limarenko at 23.20 on June 29 gave the following order to his subordinates: *"Immediately send one car and one representative to the headquarters of the corps to the commanders of the 3rd TD and 163rd MD to travel to the headquarters of the Northern Front to receive maps. **Previously received cards, all without exception** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), prepare for delivery and hand over directly to the map warehouse in Leningrad"* [209]. It was not possible to pass "everything without exception". Already after the actual defeat of the 163rd MD, on July 31, 1941, the list of operational duty officers for the management of the 163rd MD was again made on the back of the map of Finland ... [210].

Let us now return to June 23, 1941. The maximum length of the route of the units of the 1st MK on the march to Gatchina was 200-250 km. For tracked vehicles (tanks, artillery tractors), a march of such length is a big and difficult task. Difficult but doable. As mentioned above, Manstein's 56th tank corps covered 300 km from the border to Daugavpils (Dvinsk) in four days. Reinhardt's 41st tank corps also carried out a raid of approximately the same length from the border to the Daugava (see map No. 8). Moreover, the Germans did not just march, but (as is still commonly believed) "overcame the fierce resistance of the Red Army." Connections of the 1st MK (3rd tank and 163rd motorized divisions). without encountering the slightest opposition

from the ground or air enemy, they reached the area of Krasnogvardeisk (Gatchina) in two days, but with huge "losses". The collection of wheeled and tracked vehicles that lagged behind on the march continued for several more days. Judging by the operational report No. 7 of the headquarters of the 1st TD, even by June 28, out of 337 tanks of the division, only 255 units were in good condition in the concentration area. Of the 40 heavy three-turreted T-28 tanks, 17 vehicles fell behind on the march due to "friction clutch burning" [211]. Only by 01:00 on June 30 (operational report No. 11) the number of serviceable tanks increased to 278 [212]. If the tanks could "burn out the clutches", then **the losses of personnel during the march in the deepest rear** have no explanation.

Nevertheless, according to the documents of the headquarters of the 3rd TD, there were only 7359 people in the division as of June 28 (command personnel - 665, junior command personnel - 1147, privates - 5547) [213]. These are very strange numbers. According to the state in the tank division there should have been 10941 people. personnel. Already by June 1, 1941, the staffing of the 1st MK with personnel was 87% [214]. After June 1, units and formations of the western districts were replenished with personnel in the framework of the so-called BUS ("large training camps"), i.e. covert mobilization. On June 23, mobilization in the Soviet Union became open and general, and the troops of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) were generally replenished with mobilized reservists to full-time standards.

There are no explanations about the fact that the number of personnel of the 3rd TD by June 28 was (still? Already?) 67% of the regular norms, in the documents of the division headquarters are not found. Some idea of how the march of the units of the 1st mechanized corps took place can be obtained from the order signed by the commander and chief of staff of the corps



after June 25 (the exact date is not indicated in the document): *"The concentration of corps formations from Pskov to the Krasnogvardeisk region showed that the headquarters of formations and units are not able to organize, provide, regulate the march and manage it. Commanders of units and subunits do not command columns, do not organize their combat support, technical lockdown, evacuation and restoration of lagging behind and emergency materiel. The movement of the columns is unorganized and spontaneous. Collection points for emergency vehicles are not designated. The commanding staff of the units on the march does not lead. The commanders of the cars do not control the drivers, the cars move and stop as they want. March discipline is completely absent. There are no signal flags on the cars. The columns are uncontrollable, the machines do not have their permanent places in the columns..."* [215]. It is hard to believe that the order is talking about the first in number and time of

formation of the mechanized corps of the Red Army, created on the basis of the 13th and 20th Red Banner tank brigades, "veterans" of the first Finnish war. According to the staffing of tanks, armored vehicles, tractors and cars, the 1st MK was one of the "five" of the best mechanized corps of the Red Army. In September 1940, the corps participated in major exercises, during which the tank units of the corps made marches for 7 days, crossed the Velikaya River and then successfully broke into the operational depth of the defense of the conditional "enemy" ... However, the direction of movement was incomparably more significant, and not his pace and organization.

Further events (when, literally a few days after the concentration in the Gatchina area, units of the 1st MK moved back to Pskov and Ostrov) showed that if the pace of the march was zero, then it would be even better for the good of the cause. At the same time, in the first days of the war, the command of the Northern Front continued with the stubbornness of the wound up "music box" to execute point by point the pre-war operational plan. The breakthrough of German tank divisions to Siauliai, Kaunas and Vilnius did not have any visible impact on the decisions and actions of the Soviet command in Leningrad. And it's hard to say whether the command of the Northern Front knew about the catastrophic development of events in the zone of the North-Western Front (the Baltic Military District). From the standpoint of today, this question sounds wild, and yet, on June 24, on the third day of the war, the headquarters of the Northern Front issued combat order No. 5. Paragraph 3 of this

document is perceived today only as an example of "graveyard" humor. *"The experience of the first days of the war showed that the initiative of the command staff plays a huge role in the fight against the Germans. Thanks to the initiative shown, it was possible to stop the advance of the German troops on the western and southwestern fronts, with the exception of one sector, where the Germans managed to advance up to 20 km, thanks to the huge superiority in forces"* [223] .

We repeat once again - this is not the text of the editorial from the district newspaper. This combat order of the front headquarters.

A document marked "owl. secret", which the commanders of armies, corps and divisions had to be guided in their practical actions. It is worth noting that this document appeared, probably, in the course of a certain struggle of opinions. By hand (presumably - by the deputy chief of staff of the front, General

Major Tikhomirov) made two eloquent corrections. After the words "succeeded to stop", it is written by hand: "almost everywhere". The words

"with the exception of one section" have been crossed out and the words "in separate sections" have been inserted. But even with this edit, the picture of the tragic events on the western borders was distorted beyond recognition. Consoling (or deceiving) themselves and their subordinates, the command of the Northern Front continued **to work out point by point the already hopelessly outdated pre-war**

**operational plan.** The 163rd motorized division had not yet managed to concentrate in the Gatchina region, when combat order No. 5 was received from the headquarters of the Northern Front (at 14.30 on June 24): "At 17.00 24.6. . Upon arrival in the indicated area, establish surveillance of the Gulf of Finland along the northern coast of the Estonian SSR. The main task is to prevent the landing of sea and air assault forces in this area" [216]. Even earlier, on June 22 (the time is not specified in the directive), the 191st Rifle Division, which is part of the reserves of the command of the Northern Front, received an order "to immediately set out on a campaign and take defense of the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland from Narva to the port of Kunda" [217]. Provided for in the pre-war Plan of covering the Leningrad District - and which became completely absurd in the real situation - the defense of the Estonian coast from the "enemy's amphibious landings" continued further.

At 5 o'clock in the morning on June 26, combat order No. 8 of the headquarters of S.f. armored train No. 60 was sent to the section Narva-Tallinn [218]. On June 26 at 7.45 the commander of the 1st MK received combat order No. 8 of the headquarters of the Northern Fleet, in accordance with which the task was to "send one tank battalion" T-26 "to the Estonian SSR to the Tapa station (between Rakvere and Tallinn. - M.S. )" [219]. The order was carried out, and at 10.40 on June 27, the 3rd tank battalion of the 25th tank regiment (163rd ml)

was sent by rail to st. Tapa [220]. True, it should be clarified that not all of these orders to transfer parts of the Northern Front from a passive sector (the southern suburbs of Leningrad) to an even more passive one (the northern coast of Estonia) were carried out. So, already at 0.15 on June 25 to the 163rd motorized division through a communications delegate from the headquarters of S.f. Major Dobrovolsky (on a piece of paper the size of a box of cigarettes, written by hand) received a new order from the chief of staff of the front: "To the commander of the 163rd MRD. The front commander ordered to stop the movement. Disguise the stopping areas of the unit **and ensure their turn**" (**underlined** in the text. - M.S.) [221]. Where it was to turn, no one knew yet. On June 25, the commander of the 163rd MD gave his subordinates the following order: "All units urgently draw up orders for march projects. Do not mark the points of the march, as they will be indicated additionally ... Load all the transported property, ammunition and weapons at night onto vehicles" [222].

While these feverish reorganizations were taking place on the southern sector of the gigantic Northern Front, in the polar North, a thousand kilometers from Leningrad, gun salvos of a real war rumbled. True, for the time being the guns were anti-aircraft, and the war was in the air and at sea, but not on land.

Judging by the "Chronicle of the Great Patriotic War at the Northern Sea Theater" (a multi-volume documentary description of the fleet's combat operations, compiled in 1945—

1949 Historical Department of the People's Commissariat of the Navy), for the first time German reconnaissance aircraft were fired upon by anti-aircraft artillery of the Main Base of the Northern Fleet (Polyarny-Murmansk) at 20.50 on June 18 [224]. On the same day, three unknown planes flew over Kandalaksha. On June 19, at 11.32, anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on the German reconnaissance Junkers-88, which passed over the Main Base at high altitude (7500 m). 240 shells were used, alas, to no avail. June 20 at 16.45 an unknown aircraft appeared in the sky over Severomorsk and was also fired on by anti-aircraft artillery of the Northern Fleet to no avail. It is worth noting that no traces of the notorious "Stalin's order forbidding the shooting down of German reconnaissance aircraft" are found in the documents and actual events. Massive fire was fired at the intruder aircraft (in total, the air defense of the Northern Fleet had 17 four-gun 76-mm anti-aircraft batteries), and if not shot down, it was by no means due to excessive peacefulness ... On June 22 at 10.35 am, the Military Council of the Northern Fleet received an order from the People's Commissar Navy: *"Send submarines to the Vardø region, inclusive, up to the*

*Vaidagubsky lighthouse, with the task of carrying out an unlimited war against transports and warships, preventing them from entering the Varanger Fjord"* [224] (see map No. 9). Thus, the Northern Fleet was given the task of starting hostilities in the territorial waters of German-occupied Norway. In the evening at 18.50 on June 22, a new directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy No. 7/27 was received, in which the tasks were formulated even more decisively.

*"1. Continue the destruction of enemy aircraft jointly with the army strikes and the destruction of transports in the Varanger Fjord by submarines.*

*2. At the slightest sign of movement, destroy vehicles in Petsamo with the fire of destroyers and batteries and joint air strikes with the army. Destroyers fire from Kutovaya. 3. Prohibit the use by the enemy*

*of the Ainovskie Islands of field battery fire"* [225]. On June 23, directives from Moscow introduced some

restrictions on the actions of the fleet in Norwegian waters: *"Deputy People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral Isakov, ordered the Northern Fleet Armed Forces not to send their aircraft further than Petsamo and Vardø, and in Porsanger Fjord and Tana Fjord he allowed to use no more than two submarine; the rest of the submarines were supposed to block the entrance to the Varanger Fjord and cover the approaches to the Kola Bay and the Throat of the White Sea"* (see map No. 9).

On the same day (June 23), **the ban on opening hostilities against Finland was once again confirmed:** *"The People's Commissar of the Navy gave a directive to the Military Council of the Northern Fleet, by order of the Headquarters of the High Command, until further notice against Finland, no hostilities should be carried out"* [224]. Judging by the memoirs of the former

Commissar of the Navy. this decision was preceded by a heated discussion: *"On June 22, it was comparatively calm on our land border with Finland. However, German aviation already that day bombed the ships and airfields of the Northern Fleet. Late in the evening of June 22, I had a long telephone conversation with the commander of the fleet, Rear Admiral A.G. Golovko. "Stupid situation: we are being bombed, and we consider Finland a non-belligerent side!" - Arseniy got excited*

Grigoryevich. *"But so far only German aviation is operating against you, and besides, from Norwegian airfields," I explained ...* " [192]. German aviation continued

to conduct enhanced air reconnaissance in the area

The main base of the Northern Fleet.

*"From 04.50 to 19.30 enemy aircraft carried out single and group raids on the Northern Fleet Headquarters and the coast of the Motovsky and Kola bays, the Sredny and Rybachy peninsulas. At the same time, two bombs were dropped in the area of the Polyarnoye hospital, two in Murmansk and one in the Ura Bay area, some bombs were delayed. At 5.48 in the Pereima Strait, two enemy planes dropped two bombs on our tug that fell astern ... Enemy planes were fired upon by anti-aircraft machine-gun fire and*

*attacked by our fighter aircraft ... The commander of the Northern Fleet indicated to the unit commanders that during June 22-23 a number of ships fired at their aircraft. SKA "MO" fired at its "I-15", chasing the enemy aircraft, the destroyers "Kuibyshev" and "Uritsky" fired at their "SB" despite the warning. The commander of the Northern Fleet ordered to act boldly, decisively, without nervousness ...* " [224]. The Air Force of the Northern Fleet also began active hostilities. So, on June 23, nine SB bombers from the 72nd SAP (mixed air regiment) made a sortie for reconnaissance and bombardment of the Hebukten airfield

(near the Norwegian city of Kirkenes). True, they did not find the airfield due to low cloud cover. The next day, bombers of the 72nd Aviation Regiment found the Hebukten airfield: judging by the records in the Northern Fleet's railway data, "a fire was observed at the airfield after the bombing," and according to the fleet's radio reconnaissance, "at 18-53, the Kirkenes radio station notified its aircraft about the damage to the airfield ". When returning from a mission, one SB was shot down by German fighters. It was the first loss in the sky of the Arctic. On the same day, June 24, the first victory was won: Senior Lieutenant B. Safonov (the future best ace of the Polar Sky) shot down the German Junkers-88 from the Luftwaffe KG-30 bomber group in the I-16 fighter at 19.40. It is possible that another enemy bomber was also shot down: Lieutenant Rogozhin on I-16 near Kildin Island attacked the Junkers, which then

disappeared into the clouds. On the same day, after completing a combat mission, a Ju-88 crashed at the Hebukten airfield (tail number 2342, according to the quantitative estimate adopted by the Luftwaffe - "damaged by 65%"). Perhaps the unsuccessful landing was caused by damage to the aircraft after the battle with the Soviet fighter [224, 226].

In the operational report No. 06 of the headquarters of the Northern Front (not to be confused with the fleet) dated 10.00 June 25, the events of the third day of the war in the Arctic are described as follows: *from one to five bombers. There is no loss or destruction. Our ZA (anti-aircraft artillery) and the aviation of the Northern Fleet shot down three aircraft ...* " [248]. Concluding a short review of the events of the first days of the war on the Northern Front, let us now return to the main topic, to the events of the Soviet-Finnish

confrontation. Strictly speaking, there were almost no "events" (if we mean by this word the active hostilities of the parties).

On the land front, they were not at all. Already in the first directive of the Military Council of the Northern Front, there was a very specific instruction: *"Do not cross the border with Finland and do not fly over. Destroy violators on their territory"* [227]. On the other hand, starting from June 22, 1941, the word "enemy" (an integral part of almost every order, operational summary, report, etc.) either by default refers to a neighbor beyond the Soviet-Finnish border, or directly and clearly includes the Finnish army. For example, in combat order No. 01 of the headquarters of the 23rd Army, signed at 16.30 on June 23, 1941, we read:

*"1. The enemy (Finnish and German armies) are grouped in Finland up to one infantry division in Petrozavodsk and up to seven infantry divisions in the Vyborg direction.*

*2. The 23rd Army has the task of defending the fortifications along the state border, the Keksgolmsky and Vyborgsky fortified areas, to firmly hold them and prevent the enemy from invading our territory"* [ 228]. An

even more surprising phrase is found in the combat log of the 23rd Army. Theoretically, this document should have been kept directly during the events described in it. In practice, and especially in the context of the catastrophic defeat of the first weeks of the war, entries in the ZhBD were often made retroactively or even by people who were not witnesses and participants in the described hostilities. So, for example, the ZhBD of the Western Front, describing the events of the first days of the war, was signed by Lieutenant General Malandin, who spent the first week of the war in Moscow and only after the defeat of the front and the arrest of the highest command personnel began to act as deputy chief of staff of the actually newly created Western Front [229]. The fate of the 23rd Army of the Northern Front was not so tragic, and in June of the 41st Army Headquarters acted in a situation that was only "close to combat." Therefore, it is rather difficult to guess when the record dated June 23 was made, which reads: ***"By violating the peace treaty, Finland also went to war against the USSR"*** [230].

This is a very strange entry. Even without going into a discussion about which of the parties "went to war" against the other, violating the peace treaty, it can be unequivocally stated that for June 23, 1941, this phrase was far ahead of the real events. The operational reports of the headquarters of the 23rd Army, the 10th and 1st mechanized corps with monotonous constancy report that *"there were no meetings with the ground and air enemy, there were no losses."* The message that *"Ryti declared Finland at war with the Soviet Union"* flew from headquarters to headquarters in the early morning of June 27, i.e. even with an actual delay of one day. The first record of real combat operations on the front of the 23rd Army (*"during the day and night of June 29, the enemy in groups from company to battalion tried to penetrate the state border"*) appeared

two days later [231]. Most likely, the mysterious entry dated June 23 was made in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army retroactively, but even in this case it quite clearly indicates the general mood of the command staff of the Northern Front: Finland was unconditionally considered an "enemy", the start of a war with which there is only a **question time**. Of course, such "moods" arose not only (and not so much) in Leningrad, but also in Moscow. And here we must agree with Professor V.N. Baryshnikov that

*"in the USSR, without an alternative, Finland was classified as one of the long-standing participants in the German coalition in the war against the Soviet Union."*

One of the few representatives of the top military-political leadership of the USSR, who in his memoirs focused on the events of the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the former People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov repeatedly uses the following phrases: "...  
*Despite*

*the peace treaty concluded with Finland in March 1940, we did not flatter ourselves with the hope that the Ryti government would be a good neighbor ... Knowing numerous facts, we had no doubt: if Finland did not enter the war against us simultaneously with Germany on June 22, then only for tactical reasons ...* "M.M. Popov: *"It was difficult to find a reason why neither the Germans nor the Finns*

*immediately launched an offensive simultaneously with the deployment of hostilities on the western borders of our country"* [194]. It is noteworthy that even Berlin was forced to take a not so "uncontested" position. As you know, Hitler, in his radio address at 6 am on June 22, 1941, for obvious provocative purposes, stated: *"...Cooperating with their Finnish comrades, the comrades-in-arms of the winners*

*of Narvik hold the shores of the Arctic Ocean. The German divisions under the command of the victorious Norway are guarding the Finnish land, together with the heroes of the Finnish liberation battles, acting under the leadership of their marshal ...* " [121]. This declaration caused outrage in Helsinki and puzzled questions in London and Washington. As a result, Ribbentrop, at a meeting with foreign journalists, **was forced to actually disavow Hitler's statement.** In the presentation of Marshal Mannerheim himself, events developed as follows: *"Since Finland was not obliged to join the war along with the Germans, and we have*

*repeatedly emphasized this circumstance, Hitler had no right to such a unilateral statement. I cannot help thinking that such an act was intended to present Finland with a fait accompli that would force the Russians to attack, but, on the other hand, I am sure that the Russians would hardly have abandoned the attack on Finland anyway ...* ... To clarify position of Finland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day sent a circular telegram to our foreign representatives, including those working in Moscow and Berlin, indicating that Finland wishes to remain in a position of neutrality, but will defend itself if it is attacked by the Soviet Union. This statement was repeated two days later in a newsletter intended for embassies. Our statement was also taken into account in Germany, judging by the remark made at the press conference in Wilhelmstrasse, which said that **our position was not understood and that therefore**

**Finland should henceforth be considered a neutral country. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of England, speaking in Parliament, stated that England considers Finland neutral** (emphasis mine - M.S.) and that, as far as is known, no changes have occurred in relations between Finland and the Soviet Union ... " [22].



Be that as it may, but, having approached the last shaky line between peace and war, both sides - both Finland and the Soviet Union - have not yet crossed it.

**Opportunities to prevent armed conflict remained less and less, but they still existed.** Most importantly, there were no casualties until June 25. By a happy coincidence, no blood was shed, even in those cases where it was theoretically possible. The first combat

operation of the Finnish fleet, which was of great importance, was the landing of troops on the Åland Islands. These islands, blocking the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia (that is, the territorial waters of Sweden and Finland), belonged to Finland, but due to numerous international treaties, they had to have the status of a demilitarized zone. To control the observance of this regime, the Soviet consulate was located on the islands. The idea of capturing the Ålands in the very first days of the war and breaking through the Red Banner Baltic Fleet into the Gulf of Bothnia has been invariably present in the operational plans of the Soviet command since at least the spring of 1939. Regardless of what Finnish intelligence knew and did not know about the plans of the Soviet leadership, the strategic importance of the Åland Islands, a "chain" blocking the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia, was obvious to any military specialist.

On the night of June 21-22, 5,000 Finnish troops with military equipment, including 69 guns, were transferred from the mainland to the archipelago on 23 ships. Despite the fact that the appearance of Finnish troops on the islands (indisputably violating international treaties) did not pose a direct threat to the Soviet Union (more precisely, it only created **additional obstacles for a possible invasion of the Soviet fleet into the territorial waters of Finland and Sweden**), the reaction was immediate. Already at 6 a.m. on June 22 (that is, at the very time when the meeting in Stalin's office had just begun (!!!) in distant Moscow), KBF Air Force aircraft bombed Finnish ships and fortifications on Korpo Island (30 km west of Turku). However, as far as can be judged from the available sources, there were no losses of ships and casualties among the personnel. The staff of the Soviet consulate (31 people) was forcibly, but also without casualties, taken to the mainland on a Finnish ship and then returned to their homeland [26].

Until June 25, the minefields installed by Finnish submarines in the Gulf of Finland did not lead to losses and casualties. The first **mine laying was carried out on the night of June 21-22**. Then they were continued on June 23 and 24 (sometimes there are reports of alleged mine laying on June 17 or even June 14 are fiction). Minefields were laid out in the western part of the main shipping fairways of the Gulf of Finland, in the area of Gogland Island (Suursaari), Rodscher and Vaindlo lighthouses.

The work of M. Jokipia, however, contains the assertion that minefields were also placed in the "Kunda Bay" off the coast of Estonia. Kunda is a small village (5 thousand people in the early 90s) at the confluence of the river of the same name into the waters of the Gulf of Finland. Respectively, there has been a fishing pier since ancient times (and in modern times a cement plant appeared). What and why was there to mine, and in the most priority order, is not clear. It is noteworthy that neither in the memoirs of the People's Commissar of the Navy Kuznetsov, nor in the memoirs of the former commander of the KBF (and later Doctor of Historical Sciences) Admiral Tributs, **nothing is said about Finnish minefields in Kuplya Bay**. It is not surprising that many

modern Russian compilers considered it necessary to "strengthen and correct" the long-suffering book of M. Jokipia in this matter and replaced "Kunda Bay" in their fabrications with Narva Bay or Koporskaya Bay. The most unscrupulous went even further to the east and, without any sentimentality, "mined" Kronstadt ...

The Red Banner Baltic Fleet began laying minefields in the area of Gogland Island **a few days later**. The first message about the appearance of minefields in the central part of the Gulf of Finland was received on the morning of June 24th. *"The minesweepers escorting the transport" Kazakhstan "found six floating mines eight miles southwest of the Waindlo lighthouse ... All six mines were in the area where, according to official data received in 1944 from the Finnish command, their submarine set the birth of And -3. Either the Finns made some typical mistakes when preparing their submarine mines, or the latter had some technical defects, but many of them either surfaced during setting or broke anchor a little later ... On July 4, the Ural mine layer and the destroyer "Kalinin" set up a*

*minefield 14-A in the passage between the islands of Waindlo and Rodsher. The patrol ship "Purga" and two boats of the Ministry of Defense were guarded ... A few minutes before the end of the mine laying, when the detachment approached the area of the Finnish barrier I-78, unknown at that time, five enemy mines that surfaced were found ahead, to the left and to the right of the course ... Discovered mines shot boats MO. accompanying the detachment..." [106].* The first loss was the Soviet patrol boat No. 143, which

was blown up by a mine installed by Finnish submarines in the area of the Waindlo lighthouse. But this happened on the night of July 3, i.e. a week after the official declaration of war.

Returning to the events of June 22-24, 1941, it should, of course, be recognized that it is completely denial of any possible losses on the line of contact between the two armies (for example, during the actions of military intelligence groups in the adjacent territory, and such actions at least from the side of the Red Army - known) is not necessary. Nevertheless, **the possibility of choosing between a "bad peace" and a full-scale armed conflict still remained.**

## Chapter 3.3

### STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

Our story has come to its main point - the events of June 25, 1941. These events began the day before, on June 24, 1941, when the directive of the Headquarters of the High Command was signed by the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal Timoshenko. This directive was first published only in 1996. Here is its full text.

*"June 24, 1941*

*1. It has been established from reliable sources that German troops are concentrating on the territory of Finland, with the aim of striking at Leningrad and capturing the Murmansk region and Kandalaksha. To date, up to four infantry divisions have been concentrated in the Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi area and a group of unknown strength in the areas of Kotka and north of the Hanko Peninsula.*

*German aviation also systematically arrives on the territory of Finland, from where it carries out raids on our territory. According to reports, the German command intends to launch an air strike on Leningrad in the near future. This circumstance is of decisive importance.*

*2. In order to prevent and disrupt an air strike on Leningrad, planned by the German command in Finland. I ORDER:*

*The Military Council of the Northern Front from 06/25/1941 to begin combat operations of our aviation and continuous raids day and night to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields in the area of the southern coast of Finland, meaning the points of Turku, Malmi, Porvoo, Kotka, Holala, Tampere, in border areas with the Karelian Isthmus and in the area of Kemijärvi, Rovaniemi (northern Finland. - M.S.). The operation will be carried out jointly*

*with the air forces of the Northern and Baltic fleets, about which give appropriate instructions to the command of the fleets.*

*At the same time, bring the air defense of Leningrad to full combat readiness, providing reliable cover for Leningrad from German air raids by a sufficient number of fighters. Copies of the orders given to bring me to*

*24.00 06/24/1941 From the Headquarters of the High Command,*

*People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Timoshenko" [237]. When was this directive developed and*

*approved? As noted above, on June 22–23, the headquarters of the Northern Front and the Northern Fleet received categorical instructions of exactly the opposite content ("do not cross the border with Finland and do not fly over"). In the published version of the text of the Directive, there is neither time nor record number. However, it is possible to tentatively restore the chronology. The directive was signed a few hours before midnight, otherwise the subordinates would not have been able to "deliver copies of the orders given by 24.00." On the other hand, judging by the "Journal of Visits", People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko and Chief of Operations of the General Staff Vatutin (acting at that moment the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov, who was seconded to the South-Western Front) entered Stalin's office at 17.30 and left at 20.55. In it*

At the same time, Molotov, Beria and Voroshilov were in Stalin's office. It can be reasonably assumed that it was precisely at this time that these people made a decision, which was then formalized by the directive of the Civil Code.

None of the above persons left memoirs. Memoirs (and numerous) were written by the former People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov. Kuznetsov was also in Stalin's office on June 24, but for a very short time - only 15 minutes (from 16.45 to 17.00). Judging by the memoirs of the admiral, the issue of Finland was discussed at this meeting: "... *At a meeting in the office of I.V. troops on the Finnish-Norwegian border (the government knew about this before), but also about that. that they are moving across Finnish territory towards our borders...*" [192]. On June 25 and 26, the Sovinformburo reported on the decisions made. The report of the Sovinformburo for June 24, published on June 25 (i.e., on the day the massive air strikes began), said: "*Finland has placed its territory at*

*the disposal of the German troops and German aviation. For 10 days now, German troops and German aviation have been concentrated in areas adjacent to the borders of the USSR. On June 23, 6 German planes that took off from Finnish territory tried to bombard the Kronstadt area. The planes were driven off. One aircraft shot down and four German officers taken prisoner. On June 24, 4 German planes tried to bombard the Kandalaksha area, and in the Kuolajärvi area some parts of the German troops tried to cross the border. The planes have been driven off. Parts of the German troops repulsed. There are captured German soldiers.*"

In the summary of the Sovinformburo for June 25 (published on June 26), the military operations of Soviet aviation against Finland were also mentioned: "*Our aviation inflicted a number of crushing blows on German airfields in Finland, and also bombarded Memel, enemy ships north of Libava and the oil town of the port of Constanta.*" As you can see, this event was not specifically emphasized: it was mentioned in a complex sentence, along with other bombardments, and somewhat tongue-tied (there could be German planes in Finland, there could be German air units, but not "German airfields").

The Sovinformburo did not report on the severance of diplomatic relations, the recall of ambassadors, the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty, and finally, the declaration of war by the Soviet Union on Finland - and this was the purest truth.

**The Soviet Union did not break, did not withdraw, did not terminate and did not declare** - nor before the start of the air raids, nor after them.

In this sense, the situation was strikingly different from how the "winter war" was launched at the end of November 1939. It is worth noting that fascist Germany also started the war against the USSR in a different way: an hour after the first cannon salvos on the border, the German ambassador in Moscow handed Molotov an official statement from the German government, and at 6 o'clock in the morning (Berlin time) with a radio message about the start of the war Hitler himself spoke with the Soviet Union. Finland declared

that it was at war with the Soviet Union the next day, June 26, 1941. And the Soviet Information Bureau did not report anything about this! Not June 26, not any day after. What's even weirder is that

as, for example, the Sovinformburo reported in good faith on the declaration of war by Hungary on June

28. The two reports of the Sovinformburo mentioned above (for June 24 and 25) are limited to the "array of information" that was reported to the Soviet people about the circumstances of the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-

Finnish War. These events were described in much more detail in the 60-70s, in memoirs and historical literature.

Here are some typical texts. Memoirs

of the former commander of the Northern Front M.M. Popov (the book was published in 1968, but the article by M.M. Popov was written in March 1964): ***"In response to the attempts of Finnish aviation on June 23 and 24 to bombard Leningrad, Kronstadt and the cities of the K-FSSR*** (hereinafter, it is underlined by me - M.S.) *People's Commissar ordered to prepare and on June 25 to carry out a simultaneous attack on the airfields based on the German and Finnish aviation in Finland ... About 20 airfields were subjected to powerful strikes, during which it was destroyed or many enemy planes were damaged...*" "Orders of Lenin Leningrad Military District. Historical essay" ("Lenizdat",

1968): ***"On June 23 and 24, German aircraft based in Finland tried to raid Leningrad, Kronstadt and cities in Karelia. To prevent their further attacks, at dawn on June 25, Soviet aviation launched powerful strikes on 18 enemy airfields and destroyed 30 enemy aircraft on the ground. In addition, 11 aircraft were shot down in air battles. Attacks on enemy airfields continued in the following days ... "***

Memoirs of the Chief Marshal of Aviation (before the war - the commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad District) A.A. Novikov "In the sky of Leningrad" ("Nauka", 1970): ***"For the first three days, we fought only with single and small groups of enemy aircraft trying to probe the air approaches to the city ... Soviet pilots did not allow the bombing of Leningrad, Kronstadt in June, Vyborg and cities of Karelia. But, paying tribute to our pilots, we understood that the enemy's failure was largely due to the low activity of his aviation, the main striking forces of which had not yet entered into action here ... the first hours of the war. Such measures could be our active actions in the air.***

*Early in the morning of June 25, I was at the communication center located in the basement of the district headquarters building. Final preparations, clarification of data, brief negotiations with the commanders of air formations, and engines roared at the airfields. The air armada of 263 bombers and 224 fighters and attack aircraft rushed to the 18 most important enemy airfields.*

*The raid lasted several hours. One group followed another. Some objects were subjected to 3-4 hits. As a result of the first day, the enemy **lost 41 combat vehicles**. Success was evident, and the operation continued. For six days, 39 enemy airfields were hit. In air battles and on the ground, **the enemy lost 130 aircraft** and was forced **to withdraw his aircraft to distant rear bases** - beyond the range of our fighters. This relocation naturally limited*

*maneuver of enemy bombers... This multi-day operation, the first in the history of Soviet aviation, convinced us that massive strikes against deep-seated airfields are a reliable means of combating enemy aircraft..."*

Major General of Aviation, Professor M.N. Kozhevnikov, "The Command and Headquarters of the Air Force of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War" (M., "Nauka", 1977): "*In certain areas, where the situation was favorable, Soviet pilots, conducting active air battles, simultaneously delivered powerful blows to enemy airfields. Such a situation developed in the first days of the war in the northern sector of the Soviet-German front, where the Nazi troops went on the offensive only on June 29, 1941. In order to weaken the enemy air grouping in this direction and disrupt the impending raid on Leningrad. The headquarters ordered the preparation and conduct of massive strikes against the airfields of Finland and Northern Norway, where the air units of the **5th German air fleet and Finnish aviation were based.** The Air Force Command of the Northern Front developed and on June 24 approved by the Military Council of the Northern Front a plan for the destruction of enemy aircraft at airfields in the northwestern direction. A total of 540 aircraft were*

*involved in the operation. Early on the morning of June 25, 236 bombers and 224 fighters launched the first massive attack on 19 airfields. The enemy, not expecting such a strike, was actually taken by surprise and failed to organize countermeasures. As a result, Soviet pilots successfully bombed aircraft stands, fuel and ammunition depots. **41 enemy planes were destroyed at the airfields. Our aviation had no losses.** In the next five days, several more effective strikes were delivered on the same airfields and those newly discovered by air reconnaissance. According to aerial photographic control, Soviet pilots, having attacked a total of 39 airfields, made about 1,000 sorties, destroyed and disabled 130 enemy aircraft. The command of the fascist German troops in Finland and Northern Norway was forced to withdraw its aviation to distant rear airfields and abandon the raid on Leningrad in the near future ... "*

You can give a few more texts, but they will all be similar to each other, like nesting dolls. The general line of presentation was set, and until the mid-1990s, it practically did not undergo noticeable changes. Let us try to formulate this "line" of official Soviet historical propaganda as precisely and concretely as possible. 1. The political

component of the event (the actual beginning of a full-scale undeclared war) is completely passed over in silence. This side of what happened in the writings of Soviet historians simply does not exist. Only one of the major operations of the Soviet Air Force is being discussed. And no more.

2. The main (or even the only!) object on which the attack was made, airfields based "enemy aircraft" are declared. 3. The result of the

operation is beyond praise. "Success was evident", the enemy suffered huge losses (130 aircraft - two-thirds of all Finnish aviation), the few surviving enemy air units were forced to retreat "to distant rear

airfields". Our aviation "had no losses" (according to Kozhevnikov) or, perhaps, had some losses, but not worthy of special mention. 4. As part of the general

attitude to completely ignore the foreign policy component of the events of June 25, the fact that one of the consequences of the "operation" was Finland's entry into the war against the USSR is not mentioned at all. Here is a brief summary of what Soviet

historians and memoirists have been united on for half a century. Noticeable differences, however, are found in the

assessment of **actual and / or potential actions of the enemy**, and also - which is completely atypical for Soviet historiography - in the formulation of goals and objectives, for the solution of which such a successful operation was carried out in general. At these points there is **a wide range of opinions**.

The message of the Soviet Information Bureau (*"June 23, 6 German planes that took off from Finnish territory tried to bombard the Kronstadt area. The planes were driven away. One plane was shot down and four German officers were taken prisoner"*) is extremely specific (the place, time, number of planes are indicated) and - as will be shown later, it has a great resemblance to reality. The former commander of the Northern Front, in

his memoirs, speaks of "attempts **by Finnish aviation**" to bomb "Leningrad, Kronstadt and the cities of Karelia." Apparently, the "attempts" were very, very timid, since 13 pages before the phrase cited above, M.M. Popov writes that *"Leningrad and other objects on the territory of the district were not bombarded" [194]*. The official (1968 model) history of the Leningrad Military District already speaks of **"German planes"**,

which, it turns out, *"tried to make raids."* Like this? They took off, flew, and halfway changed their minds and returned? If the planes crossed the state border and at least approached Leningrad or some unnamed "cities of Karelia", then the raid had already taken place. It could be successful (for the attackers) or not, but in any case, it was a "raid", and not an "attempt to

raid."

Marshal Novikov almost "directly" reports that there were no raids "on Leningrad and the cities of Karelia" at all (*"we fought only with single and small groups of enemy aircraft trying to probe the air approaches to the city"*). It is extremely important to note that Novikov does not mention a single word about the German

air units.

Professor Kozhevnikov does not mention any raids on Leningrad at all, limiting himself only to the general wording: *"A favorable situation has developed ..."*

The purpose of the operation in the presentation of Popov is revenge: *"In response to the attempts of the Finnish aviation to bombard Leningrad ..."*. Novikov, on the other hand, argues that only *"urgent measures"* could *"save Leningrad from the fate of cities subjected to fierce bombardment."* Kozhevnikov, without further ado, returns to the original wording of the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (*"in order to disrupt the impending raid on*

*Leningrad"*). Another - hardly noticeable to the "broad readership", but understandable to specialists - is the difference between Kozhevnikov's monograph and other descriptions on June 25

1941 are: - the

appearance of a specific name for the formation of German aviation ("5th Air Fleet");  
- the

emergence of the union "and" (*"massive strikes on the airfields of Finland and Northern Norway ... air units of the 5th Air Force of Germany and Finnish aviation ..."*).  
Until the end

of the Soviet era, Kozhevnikov's monograph, in fact, determined the maximum permissible level of disclosure of the topic on June 25, 1941, which was possible for "party historians" who wanted to preserve the remnants of self-respect and scientific conscientiousness.

New time - new songs. Strictly speaking, there are exactly two new "songs" at the moment. The first is the fundamental work of the Finnish historian M. Jokipia, cloned (sometimes with quotation marks and a reference to the source, and more often without them) in the writings of Messrs. Baryshnikovs (father and son), Shirokorad and others like them. The second is a book [47], in which, apparently, for the first time in Russian historiography, it was proposed to finally recognize indisputable facts (in the first three days of the war, June 22-24, 1941, German aviation in quantities worthy of mention, in Finnish was not based on airfields and did not carry out raids on "Leningrad and the cities of Karelia") and include the fact of an air strike that actually took place on June 25 **in the general outline of events** that began on June 17, 1941 with the transfer of the 1st Panzer Division to the Arctic and ended with an unsuccessful attempt to invade 10-mechanized corps to Finnish territory.

The clash of such diametrically opposed approaches has led to a heated (and mostly incorrect) discussion. As expected, the position of voluntary resuscitators of the decayed myths of communist propaganda turned out to be quite paradoxical. First, they long and indignantly protest against the fact that in the book of M. Solonin historical research is supposedly replaced by politically motivated "denunciations" and vulgar "revelations". Enraged enough, they - not even trying to start a discussion of real events in their interconnection (which is probably the subject of historical science) - proceed to noisy denunciations themselves. They only denounce, of course, Finland, and they draw an inexhaustible supply of "revealing" (from their point of view) facts from a single source (of course, this role is played by the same book by M. Jokipii or its homegrown "clones"). The logic (if the word is appropriate here) of "denunciations" is at best built in the image and likeness of the sophism known to the ancients:

"Can a person be considered bald if he has at least one hair on his head?" With regard to the problem of June 25, 1941, this "logic" works like this: one fact is found (and Professor Jokipii's many years of work provided readers with such facts in abundance) indicating Finland's unfriendly attitude towards the mighty eastern neighbor, after which it is concluded that Finland once again "left the Soviet leadership no other choice ..."

In order to bring the discussion to the level of a constructive discussion, it is necessary, in our opinion, to start from the most important thing. The most important thing is **the most accurate definition of the essence of the issues under discussion**. Only clear



formulating the questions will take a step towards obtaining equally clear and specific answers. Considering

the deep and long-term "contamination" of the problem with ideological "garbage", it will be necessary to just as directly and clearly define the range of issues that will NOT be discussed. So:

**1. The question of the attitude of Finland** (government, military command, parties, parliament, people) **to the Soviet Union will not be discussed.** Why? Because it's a very simple question. No need to guess - and no need to rummage through archival dust for years - in order to find a predetermined answer. Finland hated Stalin and the Stalinist empire. Nothing else could have been expected after the aggression of 1939, after the death of tens of thousands of people in the icy hell of the "winter war", after a hundred thousand high-explosive and incendiary bombs that fell on undefended Finnish cities, after the expulsion of 400 thousand people from their homes. Masochism, as a severe mental disorder, occurs in individual unfortunate people, but cases of mass, "nationwide" masochistic insanity are not known in history. In any case, Finland did not suffer from this disease. **2. Formal**

**legal questions** (whether Finland was a neutral country on the morning of June 25, 1941? Can its cooperation with Nazi Germany be considered a military alliance?) **will also not be discussed.** Why? For two reasons.

Firstly, because no one is able to grasp the immensity, and the discussion of legal problems is beyond the scope of this study. The author of this book does not consider himself competent enough to discuss such complex issues. Moreover, there are hardly two specialists in international law who can come to a common assessment of that situation. At least, in the foreign policy departments of the United States and Great Britain, they did not come to a consensus. The United States refused to declare war on Finland, as a result, a diplomatic mission of the main military ally of the USSR worked in the capital of Finland, which was fighting against the USSR. Britain - under the strongest pressure from Stalin - agreed to recognize Finland as an ally of Germany and declare war on her. But this also happened only on December 6, 1941, i.e. after the main events of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war had already ended.

Of course, difficult questions can be made very simple if they are considered in the well-known "pickpocket logic", according to which everything began and ended with the fact that in a crowded bus he was grabbed by the hands and beaten in the face. Remember where BEFORE this was his hands and how many other people's wallets from other people's pockets they pulled out. pickpocket, of course, does not like ... The neutral status of Finland was put under very big doubts already by the fact of the deployment of a military base of a foreign state on its territory (the Soviet naval base in Hanko). This circumstance was greatly exacerbated by the fact that, in fact, uncontrolled transit of military equipment and military units along the Finnish railways from

Vyborg to Hanko. Finally, the very concept of "neutrality" is apparently applicable only to states that have sovereignty. It raises certain doubts about the applicability of the term "sovereignty" to a country whose government silently listens (and even accepts for execution!)

negotiations on the forced transfer of their natural resources (Petsamo nickel) to the concession to the same powerful and unceremonious

neighbor ... Secondly, the discussion of legal casuistry does not bring us any closer to answering the questions that are put in the title of this book and are its main topic. **It is not at all about whether the Soviet Union had formal grounds for bombing Finland or not.** This book was written in order to sort out another question: **did the decision made on June 24 and implemented on June 25 contribute to the security of the USSR in general and its "second capital" in particular?**

With regard to the specific historical conditions of June 1941, this question is transformed into another: did **these actions contribute to the successful conduct of the war against the main enemy - Nazi Germany?** At a

primitive everyday level, this simple logic can be illustrated by the following example: the law does not prohibit (and therefore every citizen has the right) to go into the forest and go to bed naked in the snow in winter. But the vast majority of normal sober people are in no hurry to exercise this right. Why? Because it is harmful to health (in certain cases, deadly), although it is legal from a formal legal point of view.

Now he will move from caricature metaphors to direct historical analogies.

**Bulgaria** was an ally of Nazi Germany. This is a fact confirmed by the official accession of Bulgaria to the "tripartite Pact", the entry of the German army into its territory and the actual participation of the Bulgarian army in joint military operations with the Wehrmacht on the territory of Yugoslavia. However, the Soviet Union did not start military operations against Bulgaria in the summer of 1941. Although the capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet and its aviation completely allowed it.

**Japan** was the most important ally of Nazi Germany. It was these countries that created the notorious Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Moreover, for a number of years Japan pursued a policy that was extremely hostile towards the USSR. So "hostile" that our countries twice stood on the verge of a full-scale war with each other. Nevertheless, neither in June nor in July of the 41st did the Soviet Union declare war on Japan, did not start undeclared hostilities on the ground, in the skies and at sea. On the contrary, considerable efforts were made to prevent the war in the Far East from starting. **Italy** was the oldest ally of

Nazi Germany. Moreover, Italy officially declared war on the Soviet Union. This was done at 12 noon on June 22, 1941. The Italians would have declared war earlier, but before noon to find the Soviet ambassador in Rome, comrade. Gorelkin failed (he was basking on the beach that Sunday morning).

And from Venice to Lviv is only 1000 km in a straight line. Theoretically, Soviet long-range bombers (DB-3f, Yer-2, TB-7) had a flight range of 3,000 km or more. Speaking abstractly, the entire industrialized north of Italy (Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence) was within the reach of Soviet bomber aircraft. But the crazy idea to start military operations in the summer of 1941 against Italy, which had declared war on the Soviet Union, was not even discussed, and even more so, it was not put into practice. Although from a formal legal point of view, such a crazy step would be completely flawless ...

Having finished listing what will not be discussed in this book, we now formulate **seven main questions**: 1. What forces (units, formations, aircraft) of the German and Finnish bomber aircraft based on airfields in Finland?

2. What kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group carry out during June 22-24, 1941? What actions were planned by the enemy command for the coming days and weeks?

3. What was the real scale of the threat posed by the enemy aviation grouping in Finland, compared both with other threats hanging over Leningrad and with the air defense capabilities of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet? 4. What did the Soviet command, Soviet

intelligence know about the deployment of enemy air units in Finland, about his actions and plans? 5. What was the real reason for the decision

on June 24, 1941 to launch an air strike on Finland, what were the real goals and objectives of this operation? 6. What was the immediate result of the Soviet air strike on

Finland (losses of the parties, changes in the plans of the parties)?

7. How did the June 25 air strike affect the general course of the Soviet Union's war against Germany and its allies?

Questions ## 1, 2, 3 and 6 are quite simple. And the fact of half a century of absence in Russian historiography of intelligible and universally recognized answers to such simple questions is a shame. Question No. 7 is much more difficult, an unambiguous answer is unlikely to be found, but a discussion on this problem is possible and desirable. As for questions Nos. 4 and 5, they cannot be resolved within the current source base, but at least an attempt to discuss them also has the right to exist.

## Chapter 3.4

### COMPOSITION AND BASING OF THE PARTIES' AIR FORCE

We will not reveal a terrible military secret if we recall that combat aircraft do not fly in flocks, like free birds, but conduct combat operations as part of the appropriate subunits, units and formations. Units and formations have their own numbers, headquarters and battle colors. As well as quite specific places of deployment (basing). All this lends itself to concrete accounting and description, which description - in relation to German and Finnish aviation - has long been completed by the efforts of two generations of professional historians. All that is required of us is conscientious work at the level of a modest student essay. Before offering the reader an ultra-short "abstract" compiled on the basis of [26, 52, 53, 65, 88, 145, 226, 239, 240, 241, 243, 311], let's define the terms and definitions used. This is all the more necessary, given that the German, Finnish and Soviet Air Forces had a different structure and number of basic tactical units (military leaders, alas, did not take care of the convenience of future historians).

Let's start with German aviation, because. it was her presence on Finnish territory that became, as is commonly believed, the main cause of the events of June 25, 1941. The main tactical unit of the Luftwaffe was the aviation

**group.** The Luftwaffe air group included three **squadrons** ("staffels") of 12 crews each. The squadron, in turn, was divided into three **units** of 4 crews each. In total, the Luftwaffe air group, fully staffed according to the staffing table, should have (including the headquarters link) 40 crews. Several groups (usually three) were part of a tactical formation, which in Russian-language literature is usually called **a squadron** ("geschwader" in German). Several squadrons of the Luftwaffe were reduced to **an aviation corps**. The highest organizational structure of the Luftwaffe was **the Air Fleet**, which, as a rule, included two air corps, i.e. from 5 to 12 squadrons, in total about 500-1000 crews. Squadrons were designated as follows: JG (fighter), KG (bomber),

SiG (assault). Squadrons armed with Me-110 multipurpose twin-engine fighter-bombers were designated as ZG ("destroyers") or SKG ("high-speed bombers"). The Luftwaffe air group was designated as an integral part of the corresponding squadron. For example. II / KG-53 is the second group of the 53rd bomber squadron. There was no special naval aviation (similar to the Soviet Navy Air Force or US Naval Aviation) in the German Armed Forces. For joint operations

with the fleet, special formations were created within the framework of the general structure of the Luftwaffe. For example, in the Baltic theater of operations, which is directly related to the topic of our book, a formation called "Fliegerfuhrer Ostsee" (which can be translated as "Baltic Air Command") was deployed. It included the KGr-806 bomber group, a seaplane group (Aufkl.Gr-125), and a tactical reconnaissance squadron.

The main tactical unit of Soviet aviation was an aviation regiment. Before the war, according to the current staffing table, the Soviet air regiment consisted of five **squadrons** of 12 crews each and a command level, a total of 62–64 crews (i.e., the Soviet regiment was one and a half times more than the Luftwaffe air group in terms of the number of crews). Fighter (IAP), bomber (BAP), assault (SHAP) and

reconnaissance (RAP) air regiments were formed in the Soviet Air Force. Each regiment had its own "personal" number (for example, the 123rd IAP, the 40th BAP). Sometimes the name of the bomber regiments indicated their functional purpose: high-speed bomber (SBAP), long-range bomber (DBAP), heavy bomber (TBAP). Several regiments (from 3 to 5) were combined into **an air division**: fighter (IAD), bomber (BAD), mixed (SAD). Assault air regiments at the beginning of the war were part of the SADs. Reconnaissance aviation regiments, as a rule, were not part of air divisions, reporting directly to the command of the fronts (1-2 RAPs as part of the district / front aviation). The navy of the USSR had its own aviation, separate from the ground forces. At the level of divisions and units (link, squadron, regiment), the structure of the Navy Air Force did not differ from the structure of front-line aviation. But there were no divisions in the Navy Air Force, and a formation of

two (as a rule) air regiments was called **a brigade**. Another difference between the Navy Air Force was the existence of the so-called "mine and torpedo" regiments (MTAP) in its composition. These regiments were armed with DB-3/DB-3f long-range bombers, specially equipped to drop deep sea mines and aircraft torpedoes.

The extremely small (in comparison with the gigantic aviation of the eastern neighbor) Finnish Air Force also had a very bizarre structure, when two units of the same type could have from 3 to 33 aircraft. Additional confusion is created by the fact that a tactical unit roughly corresponding to a German air group was called an "air squadron" (Lentolaivue, abbreviated as LLv) in the Finnish Air Force, and a formation that included several Lentolaivue and roughly corresponded to a severely understaffed Luftwaffe squadron was called an "air regiment" (Lentorykmentti).

In order to simplify the further presentation of events, we **will violate the correctness of the literal translation**, and the main tactical unit of the Finnish Air Force (LLv) will be referred to hereinafter as **a "group"**, and its constituent units as **"squadrons"**. The group was supposed to include three squadrons of 12 crews each. The fighter and bomber groups of the Finnish aviation did not differ in names in any way, which, however, will not create big problems for the reader, since all three bomber groups (LLv-42, LLv-44, LLv-46) did not participate in the hostilities of June 1941 . did not accept.

Having finished with the discussion of terminology, we now turn to accounting for the number and deployment of the aviation forces of the parties.

The situation in which the Luftwaffe command found itself on the Eastern Front might at first glance seem hopeless. There were very few forces. Few in comparison with the number of enemy aircraft (i.e. Soviet Air Force), few in

compared to any theoretical norms, it is small compared to the experience of previous campaigns.

In May 1940, the Germans managed to concentrate on the Western Front the largest grouping of Luftwaffe forces in the entire period of the Second World War. The offensive of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France, on a front of 300 km in a straight line (from Arnhem to Saarbrücken), was supported from the air by two Air Fleets (2nd and 3rd), which included 27 fighter and 40 bomber air groups, 9 groups of Ju-87 dive bombers and 9 groups of multipurpose twin-engine Me-110. A total of **85 groups, 3641 combat aircraft** (and this is without taking into account the outdated Arado Ar-68 and Henschel Hs-123 biplanes, without taking into account reconnaissance transport and air ambulance aircraft). The operational density is **12 aircraft per kilometer** of the offensive front.

On June 22, 1941, 22 fighter and 29 bomber air groups, 8 groups of Ju-87 dive bombers and 4 groups of multipurpose twin-engine Me-110s were concentrated on the Eastern Front (including Luftwaffe units stationed in northern Norway and Romania). A total of **63 groups, 2344 combat aircraft** (including defective ones). After the previous many months of fighting in the Balkans and over the Mediterranean Sea, the technical condition of the Luftwaffe fleet was depressing. The average percentage of combat-ready aircraft was about 77%. Air groups such as II / JG-77, III / JG-27, I / StG-2, II / KG-53, III / KG-3, I / ZG-26 arrived on the Eastern Front with less than half of staff number of serviceable

aircraft.

The minimum length of the offensive front, even on the very first day of the war, was 800 km in a straight line (from Klaipeda to Sambir). Within two weeks, the width of the war front almost doubled (1,400 km in a straight line from Riga to Odessa). Even without taking into account the losses of the first days, the average operational density of German aircraft dropped to **2 aircraft per kilometer** of the offensive front (again, including faulty ones). It only remains to add to

this that, according to the pre-war ideas of Soviet military science, a front-line offensive operation required the creation of densities of 15–20 aircraft per kilometer. Even Hitler, although he is considered to be paranoid, understood the disproportion of forces and tasks: *"With such a huge space, the Luftwaffe is not able to process it entirely at the same time; At the beginning of a war, aviation can only dominate parts of a gigantic front. Therefore, it should be used only in close cooperation with ground operations..."* [120]. Now let's look at the situation from the other side, from the side of Germany's opponents. In May 1940, the fighter force of French

aviation in the combat zone consisted of 34 squadrons, i.e. about 400-450 fighters. Taking into account the fighter aviation of Holland, Belgium and the expeditionary forces of the British Air Force, the strength of the Western Allies grouping increases to **50 squadrons, 600-650 pilots**. The Soviet Air Force (fighter aviation of five western districts and two navies) had about **260 squadrons, 3550 pilots** (there were much more fighter aircraft, since many air regiments accumulated a double set of aircraft in connection with the re-equipment with new types of fighters ).

Is it necessary to prove that under such conditions the German command had neither the opportunity nor the desire to provide "charitable assistance" to the newly acquired allies. The state of affairs was determined by the words "ours are not enough." Even for the defense of the most important strategic object - the region of the Romanian oil fields Ploiesti, in the preservation of which Germany was perhaps more interested than Romania itself - only one fighter group (III / JG-52) was allocated. Taking into account the aircraft of the headquarters of the 52nd squadron, the oil fields were covered by only 47 Messerschmitts.

Let us now move from the general to the particular, to an analysis of the situation on the northern flank of the war. The offensive of the Army Group "North" from East Prussia through the Baltic states and Pskov or Leningrad was supported from the air by the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe. The fleet included 8 bombers (II, II / KG-1, I, II, III / KG-76, I, II, III / KG-77) and 4 fighters (I, II, III / JG-54, II / JG-53) groups, which were armed with (including faulty vehicles) 240 medium twin-engine Ju-88 bombers and 164 single-engine Bf-109F fighters. A total of 404 combat aircraft. Not a single Ju-87 dive bomber (this is an integral part of any "documentary" film about the beginning of the war), not a single Me-110 fighter bomber was part of the 1st Air Fleet. Which, in particular, means very limited opportunities for targeted bombing on such point targets as aircraft on the airfields of airfields ... In parentheses, we note that in most publications of domestic historians, even in the most recent

[242], as part of the 1st Air Fleet "detected" at least one and a half times more aircraft. Graceful cheating tricks (not changing at all over the past half century) continue to please the eye. The first and foremost is the summation of combat aircraft (fighters, bombers, attack aircraft) with reconnaissance, communications, transport, ambulance aircraft and airplanes. Of course, such summation is carried out only in relation to German aviation. Since there are always a lot of auxiliary aircraft in quantity, the numbers are obtained to your heart's content. It's like writing: "In the yard of the peasant Pupkin live two horses, one bull, two cows and 20 sheep, and only 25 heads of cattle." And isn't that true? Well, to top it all off, two groups from the German air defense were added to the number of fighters of the 1st Air Fleet, not a single plane of which had ever crossed the border of the USSR; reconnaissance seaplanes from the Fliegeiführer Ostsee formation are added to the bombers, which have never appeared in the sky over the Soviet Baltic ... As a result, Air Chief Marshal AA Novikov, in his memoirs, without a shadow of embarrassment, reports that "in the first days of July, in the Leningrad direction, the entire *1- th German Air Fleet, which had 1070 combat vehicles ...* "

However, the phrase mentioned above contains an important (and for the purposes of this chapter, the most important) recognition: units and formations of the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe appeared in the "Leningrad direction" "in the first days of July", i.e. only after the catastrophic defeat of the North-Western Front (Baltic OVO) allowed the German command to relocate the Luftwaffe air groups from East Prussia to the airfields of the occupied Baltic and the Pskov region. For the first time in the days of the war, the formation of the 1st V.f. fought against the aviation of the North-Western Front (three times the enemy in the number of aircraft and twice in

number of crews) and supported from the air the offensive of the 41st and 56th tank corps of the Wehrmacht. Of course, **no relocation of parts of the 1st V.f. to Finland, i.e. there were no German troops for many hundreds of kilometers from the combat area**, and the air groups of the 1st Air Fleet were not directly related to the events that took place in the first weeks of the war in the sky over Leningrad and the cities of Karelia. The first (and at the same time unsuccessful) attempt by German bombers to break through to Leningrad from the south-west was made only on July 20. The first massive raid on Leningrad took place even later - on September 6, 1941 [254].

The German 5th Air Fleet operated in the far north of Europe. Air groups of the 5th V.f. based on the airfields occupied in the spring of 1940 Norway. The main task of the 5th V.f. was the protection of the gigantic in length (more than 2000 km), indented by countless skerries, the coastline of Norway from a possible landing of English amphibious assault forces. In addition, on the 5th V.f. tasks of reconnaissance and combat against British transport and warships in the North Atlantic were assigned. With such extensive tasks, the 5th V.f. was the smallest in the Luftwaffe (as of June 24, 1941, the fleet included 283 combat aircraft of all types, of which only 189 were operational). It is no secret that operations in the Soviet Arctic, with the aim of capturing Murmansk and Kandalaksha, seemed

to the Wehrmacht command a senseless diversion of forces from solving the main tasks. And as part of the installation on the defeat of the Soviet Union during the short-term campaign, this skepticism was fully justified.

The transport "corridor" from the United States across the North Atlantic to Murmansk acquired strategic importance much later. Moreover, in the spring of 1941, no one could say with certainty whether Soviet-American military cooperation would arise at all. Nevertheless, Hitler's order had to be carried out, and the army command planned two offensive operations (from the Petsamo region to Murmansk, from the Salla region to Kandalaksha), and the command of the 5th Air Fleet formed a special "Kirkenes air force", which was instructed to support offensive of German troops in the Arctic.

Under the command of Colonel Nielsen as part of the Kirkenes Air Force there were the following units and subdivisions:

- a group of dive bombers IV / StG-1; - one squadron from the bomber group II / KG-30; - two squadrons from the fighter group IV / JG-77; - one link of multipurpose fighter-bombers from the Z / JG-77. In mid-June 1941, these units and subunits were concentrated **in northern Norway**, at the airfields of Hebukten (near the city of Kirkenes) and Banak (near the city of Lakselven) (see map No. 9). As of June 24, 1941, the Luftwaffe grouping near the borders of the USSR included:

- 42 Ju-87 dive bombers, of which 39 (according to other sources - 33) in good condition;

- 12 Ju-88 medium twin-engine bombers, 10 of them in good condition;

- 22 Messerschmitt Bf-109E fighters;



- 4 twin-engine fighter-bomber Me-110. In fact, one of the two fighter squadrons was based at the Banak airfield (250 km west of the Soviet border) and practically did not participate in hostilities. The fighter cover of the German troops advancing on Murmansk was to be provided by the forces of a single Messerschmitt squadron. After the outbreak of the Soviet-German war (but even before the start of the offensive of the Dittl mountain rifle corps on Murmansk), this squadron (13 / JG-77) was relocated to the Luostari airfield located in **Finland**, a few kilometers from the border with the USSR. These 10 serviceable Messerschmitts at the Luostari airfield were **the first and only Luftwaffe fighter unit** based in Finland. One long-range reconnaissance unit (3 twin-engine Dornier Do-17s) from the 124th reconnaissance group (1. (F) / 124) was also transferred to the operational subordination of the Kirkenes air force command. This unit was based **at the airfield of the Finnish city of Rovaniemi** and, starting from June 18, 1941, made several reconnaissance raids over Soviet territory. Most likely, the flight over

Kandalaksha of these aircraft was recorded in the reports of the command of the Northern Fleet. Thus, **even before June 25, 1941, German aviation was based in northern Finland, consisting of one squadron of fighters and one link of long-range reconnaissance, a total of 13 serviceable aircraft.** Of course, this "aviation" could not subject Leningrad to a *"furious bombardment"* (which, according to Marshal Novikov, the Soviet command expected). And not only because fighters are not adapted for solving such problems. From Luostari to Leningrad - 1100 km in a straight line. The estimated range of the Messerschmitt Bf-109E is not enough even for a suicidal one-way flight ...

The grouping of German aviation in the Arctic was opposed by the 1st air division (1st SAD) of the Soviet Air Force and the aviation of the Northern Fleet. The 1st SAD included three air regiments: two fighter (145th IAP, 147th IAP) and one bomber (137th BAP). The Air Force of the Northern Fleet included the so-called "mixed aviation regiment" (72nd SAP), which included fighter, bomber and reconnaissance squadrons. By the beginning of hostilities (June 29, 1941), the grouping of Soviet aviation in the Arctic consisted of:

- 49 light twin-engine SB bombers, 43 of them in good working order state;  
- 72 I-16 fighters, of which 67 are in good condition; - 51 I-153 fighters, 48 of them are in good condition. Thus, in terms of the number of bombers, the forces of the parties were approximately equal, while in terms of the number of combat-ready fighters, the Soviet Air Force had an 11-fold superiority. Strictly speaking, the 147th IAP and 72 SAP were armed with 47 more I-15bis fighters, but this machine was already outdated by that time and was hardly suitable for air combat (these aircraft were used mainly for attacking ground targets ).

**German aviation was also based** on the territory of southern (more precisely, central) Finland . This "aviation" consisted of **one link** of long-range scouts under the command of Hauptmann Bolle. This unit was armed with **three**

**aircraft** (two Dornier Do-215 and one Heinkel He-111). From June 20 to September 13, 1941, this link was based at the Finnish airfield Luonetjärvi (near the city of Jyväskylä), from where it repeatedly made reconnaissance flights over Soviet territory. Let's

summarize. Even before the start of Soviet air strikes on Finland (that is, until June 25, 1941), three units of German aviation were based on **Finnish territory**: - a fighter

squadron at the Luostari airfield (Petsamo region); - a

reconnaissance unit at the Rovaniemi airfield (northern Finland); -

reconnaissance unit at the Luonetjärvi airfield (near Jyväskylä, central Finland);

**18 aircraft in total (12 fighters, 6 long-range reconnaissance aircraft, 0 bombers).**

That's all there was.

The remaining 2326 combat aircraft (99.23% of the total number of the Luftwaffe grouping deployed for the war against the USSR) were based in northern Norway, East Prussia, occupied Poland and Romania. By June 25, 1941, many Luftwaffe air units (primarily fighter units) were already based **on Soviet airfields**. Of course, the above figure (99.23%) should not be taken too seriously, since the number of "Luftwaffe groupings in Finland" (18 aircraft) is much less than the arithmetic error in determining the total number of German aircraft on the Eastern Front. However, basing aviation does not exhaust all the possibilities of using the territory of a friendly country. For example, American

aviation has never been based on the territory of the USSR (at least, such expressions are not used in any book known to us). However, it is a well-known fact that in the summer of 1944 Allied bombers based in the British Isles, having bombed German military installations in southern Poland, landed on Soviet territory (near Poltava), where they were refueled for the return flight. . Something similar happened in June 1941. Here we must return to the KGr-806 bomber group mentioned above. This air group (30 Junkers

Ju-88, of which 18 are in good condition) was part of the Baltic Air Command, based in East Prussia (Proverén airfield) and was supposed to act in the interests of the Naval Forces. The main task of the German Navy was to "lock up" the Red Banner Baltic Fleet (in terms of the number and tonnage of surface warships, it surpassed the available forces of the German fleet by a head) in the Gulf of Finland and prevent it from entering the southwestern part of the Baltic Sea. The Germans solved this problem with great success for themselves, setting up a dense system of minefields at the exit from the Gulf of Finland (in the strip from Hanko to Dago Island) in the first two or three days of the war. After that, the surface ships of the Baltic Fleet did not even make a single attempt to enter the greater Baltic.

However, "the stock does not pull the pocket," and simultaneously with the installation of minefields at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, the German command planned the installation of bottom magnetic mines in the Kronstadt area. To accomplish this task, one squadron (10 aircraft) from the KGr-806 and one link (4 Junkers Ju-88) from the KuD.FI.Gr-506 "coastal" air group were involved. In theory

the estimated flight range of the Ju-88 made it possible to complete this task without intermediate landings and refueling. The distance from Kronstadt to the Proverén airfield is 900 km in a straight line, and the maximum flight range of the Junkers Ju88-5 given in any reference book is 2250 km. But for the maximum range you have to "pay" with the minimum weight of the bomb load, which in this case was undesirable for the Germans. Therefore, it was decided after completing the task **to land for refueling in Finland at the Utti airfield** (near Kouvola station).

At the same time, the total length of the route was almost halved, and each Junkers was able to take two heavy aircraft mines weighing 985 kg each.

The raid was carried out in the early morning of June 22, 1941. In the area of the Kronstadt Naval Base, 25 bottom magnetic mines were dropped (according to Soviet data). The fact that the operation was carried out in the first hours of the war is by no means accidental.

Heavily loaded "Junkers", without any fighter cover, had to operate in an area where several hundred Soviet fighters could theoretically be raised to intercept them. Under such conditions, only the suddenness of the strike allowed the Germans to count on success.

In addition to the air raid on the night of June 21-22, KGr-806 bombers appeared in the airspace over the Gulf of Finland and the Karelian Isthmus and on the night of June 22-23 (see the next chapter). Most likely, they carried out a similar task of mining approaches to Kronstadt, followed by landing and refueling at the Finnish airfields Utti, Hyvinkä and Malmi (the last two in the Helsinki region), but this version requires further research.

Having completed the search for the slightest traces of German aviation on Finnish soil, we now turn to a brief review of the composition and deployment of that aviation, the presence of which on the territory of Finland is beyond doubt. By June 1941, the Finnish Air Force had 5 fighter groups (LLv-24, LLv-26, LLv-28, LLv-30, LLv-32), which (including faulty vehicles) were armed with, respectively, 33, 26, 27, 23 and 24 aircraft.

In addition, the air groups LLv-6, LLv-12 and LLv-14 had, respectively, 5, 10 and 12 fighters. Thus, in total, there were **160 fighter aircraft of eight (!)** Different types in the combat units of the Finnish Air Force. We will talk about the deployment, armament and combat capabilities of the Finnish fighter aircraft in the following chapters, devoted to the course and outcome of the Soviet "bomber offensive" on June 25-26. In this chapter, one should decide on the composition and combat capabilities of Finnish bomber aircraft.

The bomber aviation of Finland consisted of three groups (LLv-42, LLv-44, LLv-46), which, respectively, were armed with **9 (nine), 8 (eight) and 7 (seven)** aircraft. The main base was the Siikakangas airfield (45 km northeast of Tampere), where LLv-42 and LLv-44 were deployed. The headquarters of Lentorykmentti-4 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Somerto and the bombers of the LLv-46 group were based at the Luonetjärvi airfield. In addition, the above-mentioned understaffed LLv-6 group included a flight of bombers (three captured Soviet SBs captured during the "winter war"). This group was based in the area of the city of Turku. **In total, the bomber units of the Finnish Air Force were thus armed with 27 aircraft.**

The main types of bombers were the English Blenheim (20 aircraft) and the captured Soviet SB (3 aircraft). The LLv-46 group included 4 more aircraft, which in various sources are designated as captured Soviet DB-3s and American transport Douglas DC-3s. According to the main tactical, technical and weight characteristics, according to the time of development, the Blenheim was the "sibling" of the most massive Soviet SB bomber. The first flight of the Tupolev SB took place on December 30, 1934, the first Blenheim took to the skies on April 12, 1935. The basic design concept of these aircraft was also common: a light twin-engine bomber with a very modest bomb load weight, but at the same time having a high maximum speed, allowing you to avoid meeting with enemy fighters.

	Weight	Weight Power	Speed Bomb	speed. takeoff	Max. engines empty near	Max. range at load, bomb
		the ground		Max.	kg	load
Blenheim 4441 Mk IV	6356		2x905 hp 350	447	600	1870 km/454 kg
SB bis-2 (1939) By	4427 6175		2x950 hp 375	425	1600	1350 km / 500 kg

the summer of 1941, both aircraft were obsolete. The idea behind their design turned out to be stillborn. The best fighter planes (the Soviet MiG-3, the German Messerschmitt Bf-109F-2) developed a maximum speed of 628 and 600 km/h, respectively, and caught up with the so-called "high-speed bombers" of the 30s with the same ease, with which sports car is catching up with a pedestrian. True, serious efforts were made in the Soviet Union to improve the Security Council. At the end of 1940, the serial production of the latest modification of this combat vehicle, the Ar-2 dive (!) bomber, began.

Thanks to a significantly "ennobled" aerodynamics and the installation of uprated to a power of 1100 hp. M-105 engines, the diving Ar-2 developed a speed of 443 km / h near the ground and 512 km / h at an altitude of 5 km. The design allowed dive bombs of both internal and external suspension (maximum 2 bombs FAB-500 + 2 FAB-250). Unfortunately, in February 1941, the production of Ar-2 was curtailed. In total, they managed to release 198 Ar-2 dive bombers. Returning to the

events of June 1941, we must admit that two dozen Finnish bombers, taking off from airfields in the Tampere and Jyväskylä regions, were theoretically

capable of bombing Leningrad (400 km in a straight line from Tampere). It is equally important to immediately note another indisputable fact: the distance from Tampere to Leningrad, to the nearest micron, is equal to the distance from Leningrad to Tampere, therefore, the Soviet Air Force also had the technical ability to strike at the airfields based on the Finnish bomber groups. This is all the more true because the bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, along with the SB, were also long-range bombers DB-3f (91 serviceable aircraft) with a maximum flight range of more than 3000 km.

Nevertheless, not a single Soviet air bomb fell on the airfields of Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi. Moreover, during June 25-26, Soviet aviation did not even make a single attempt to attack these airfields. This fact alone puts the version about that under great doubt. that the command of the Red Army was very worried that the frail forces of the Finnish (or German airfields based in Finnish) aviation would subject Leningrad to a "violent bombardment." However, taking into account the composition and strength of the air defense of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Air Force of the Northern Front (Leningrad VO) and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, there should have been no reason for concern.

Turning from the aviation of Finland to a brief overview of the Soviet Air Force, we, like the fabulous Gulliver, get from the "country of midgets to the country of giants" (see map No. 10). The 5th NAD (division headquarters in Vyborg) was located closest to the border with Finland. Two fighter regiments of this division (7th and 159th IAP) were based on the Karelian Isthmus (airfields of Suurmerioki, Maisniemi, Grivochki), the third regiment (158th IAP) was located at the "directly opposite end" of the district territory, in the area south of Pskov (airfield Veretene). In addition, the 153rd IAP from the 55th SAD (division headquarters in Petrozavodsk) was based on the Karelian Isthmus, in the Kexholm area.

Three fighter air divisions were deployed in the immediate vicinity of Leningrad: the 3rd IAD (headquarters in Gorelovo), the 39th IAD (headquarters in Pushkin). 54th IAD (headquarters in Levashovo). The 19th IAP, 44th IAP, 154th IAP, 156th IAP, 26th IAP, 157th IAP were based at the airfields of Gorelovo, Vitino, Ropsha, Zaitsevo, Lezier, Kolpino, Levashovo, Uglovo.

Another regiment (155th IAP from the 39th IAD) was based at the airfield Gorodets (120 km south of Leningrad).

The necessary clarification refers to the very term "aerodrome". All of the above airfields were among the so-called "base", i.e. in addition to the actual airfield, there should have been everything necessary for the combat work of the flight crew and aviation equipment (fuel and ammunition supplies, repair, technical, sanitary, meteorological services and units). Along with the basic ones, there were also so-called "operational" airfields, which had only the minimum necessary equipment for flight operations. In an era when a fighter plane weighed 2-3 tons and had a landing speed of no more than 120-140 km / h, a flat field could be used as an operational airfield in summer after minimal preparation of the runway, equipment of the simplest shelters for flight and technical personnel and installation of several gas tanks. That is why the number of operational airfields was many times greater than the number of base airfields.

So, in the western military districts of the USSR, as of January 1, 1941, there were 614 airfields of all types, and by July 15, another 164 airfields were built. In particular, as of January 1, 1941, there were already 86 airfields in the Leningrad Military District, and another 25 were built in the first half of the

year [272]. The nine air regiments mentioned above (excluding the 158th IAP and the 155th IAP) included **472 fighter pilots**. There were many more planes. It is almost impossible to give an exact number, since the Air Force of the Leningrad District was undergoing an intensive replacement of the aircraft fleet, and in some fighter regiments (7th IAP, 159th IAP, 153rd IAP) there were twice as many aircraft as pilots.

Approximately the number of fighter aircraft in the above ten air regiments can be estimated at **620-650 units, including at least 160 of the latest MiG-3 fighters** (the fighter units of the Leningrad District were among the very first, in February - March 1941.). Judging by the memoirs of the former commander of the Air Force of the district, another 105 MiGs were in the process of assembly and flight.

The composition of the fighter aircraft of the Leningrad District was not exhausted by the regiments indicated above. On the eve of the war, eight more air regiments were in the formation stage in the LenVO. Thus, the 191st, 192nd, 193rd fighter regiments were formed at the Maisniemi airfield (Karelian Isthmus). In addition, the 38th IAP was based in the Tallinn area (47 serviceable I-16s, 53 pilots). This regiment was organizationally part of the Air Force of the North-Western Front, but territorially it was closer to Helsinki than all others, and practically did not participate in the hostilities of the North-Western Front in the first days of the war (the Germans approached Estonia

much later). In addition, the main forces of the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet were based in the immediate vicinity of Leningrad, including the 61st Fighter Brigade (the headquarters of the brigade was New Peterhof). In total, there were (according to various sources) **about 350 fighter aircraft** in service with three fighter regiments and seven separate squadrons of the KBF Air Force, of which about 300 were in combat-ready condition (I-16 - 137; I-153 - 100; MiG-3 - 32; Yak-1 - 8) [263]. Without pretending to be particularly accurate, we can say that in general, **the Soviet command could counter each Finnish Air Force bomber with about 30 fighters**. Fighter aircraft were the

main, but not the only component  
air defense systems.

In addition to fighter planes, ground-based anti-aircraft artillery also existed to combat enemy aircraft. This component of the air defense system in Russian historiography is rarely remembered, reluctantly, with an obligatory sob ("at the beginning of the war, there was an acute shortage of anti-aircraft weapons ..."). There is no need to argue with this. Anti-aircraft weapons - like money - are always "severely lacking." But not everywhere is equally "sharp". As already noted in previous chapters, by the beginning of the "winter war", Finland was armed with 38 (thirty-eight) medium-caliber anti-aircraft guns (76-mm Bofors M / 29) and 53 (fifty-three) small-caliber 40-mm Bofors »

M/38. The capital of the British Empire, the city of London, the entrance of the famous "battle for England" (September-October 1940) was defended by 452 anti-aircraft guns of all calibers.

Anti-aircraft artillery of Leningrad (2nd Air Defense Corps) by the spring of 1941 was re-equipped with the latest 85-mm anti-aircraft guns [194]. The former 76-mm anti-aircraft guns also remained in the district, as a result, by the beginning of the war, the 2nd Air Defense Corps was armed with about 600 **85-mm guns, 246 76-mm guns, 60 small-caliber guns**, 230 anti-aircraft machine guns. As well as 483 searchlight stations, 297 barrage balloons and 8 RUS-1 radar stations [154].

All radars, organizationally part of the 72nd separate radio battalion, were deployed in the Finnish direction. The first line of five radar stations ran along the border with Finland and the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, from Korpiselkä to

Kingisepp. Three other radars were deployed in the area of Pitkyaranta, Kexholm, Ligovo.

The naval bases of the Baltic Fleet, of course, had their own separate air defense systems. So, the Kronstadt naval base was defended (in addition to the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery of warships) by 48 anti-aircraft guns of 76 mm caliber and 8 anti-aircraft guns of 85 mm caliber. In addition, the Northern Air Defense Zone (commanded by Major General F.Ya. Kryukov) included the Vyborg Air Defense Brigade District (474th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment in Vyborg and the 225th Separate Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion in Kexholm). The southern approaches to Leningrad were covered by the Luga air defense brigade area, which included six anti-aircraft artillery battalions.

These facts are quite eloquent and hardly need special comments. But it is impossible not to cite the competent opinion of the Chief Marshal of Aviation of the USSR, the former commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad District A.A. Novikova: *"In the north of Leningrad, the enemy put Finnish aviation and the 5th German Air Fleet against us - a total of 900 aircraft. The district aviation could cope with such forces. But in early July..."* [244]. If, in the opinion of the district aviation commander, "could cope" with nine hundred aircraft of the 5th Air Force that do not exist in nature. and Finnish aviation, then, presumably, the real enemy grouping (no more than fifty Finnish and German bombers at the airfields of southern and central Finland) did not create a threat of "force majeure" for Leningrad.

## Chapter 3.5

### FLIGHTS IN DREAMS AND WAKE UP

Having dealt with the composition and deployment of Finnish aviation and German aviation units based in Finland, let's move on to the second question: what kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group conduct during June 22–24, 1941? Before proceeding to consider the few documents available and the facts that have become known, it is nevertheless necessary to make one remark of a general nature. The transition from a peaceful life

(even if this life took place in the form of service in the army or navy) to war, to the continuous and every second threat of losing life, health, good name (in case of failure to fulfill the assigned combat mission) is the strongest stress. This word ("stress") was not in vogue at that time, but the inevitable stress itself and the mistakes it inevitably caused, confusion, and sometimes panic were greatly intensified by the mysterious pre-war "Stalin's games". The meaning of these "games" to this day causes fierce disputes among historians. It was even less clear to the contemporaries of the events, the senior commanders of the Red Army and Navy, who were required to *"meet a possible surprise strike"*, but at the same time *"carefully mask the increase in combat readiness"* and *"not succumb to provocations"* [12]. The reader who is fairly familiar with

Russian memoirs and historical journalism should be aware of the widespread legend "about Admiral Kuznetsov and Sevastopol." Summary of the legend: People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov "was not afraid to violate Stalin's ban" and gave the fateful order to put the fleet on "combat readiness", as a result of which the first German air raid on Sevastopol was successfully repulsed, and with heavy losses for the aggressor. A slightly more detailed examination of the factual side of the case reveals

the following details. The directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy, sent at 1.50 on June 22 to the

command of the fleets, almost verbatim repeated a similar directive No. 21, sent to the command of the military districts signed by People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko, and included **all the above ambiguous instructions**. In the main base of the Black Sea Fleet, events unfolded as follows. At 2.15 on June 22, the air defense headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet ordered the introduction of a blackout regime in Sevastopol. For a full guarantee, the "main switch" of the city's energy supply was centrally turned off. Sevastopol plunged into the pitch darkness of the southern summer night, in which the lights of two lighthouses shone dazzlingly: Inkerman and Chersonesos. Wired communication with them was interrupted (presumably by saboteurs). The messenger from the headquarters never reached the Inkerman lighthouse, and the lighthouse, whose visibility range was 24 nautical miles, continued to burn, unmasking the city and port. At 2.35 am on June 22, the RUS-1 radar station at Cape Tarkhankut

detected an air target coming from the west. At 3.05 sound direction-finding stations recorded



the noise of aircraft engines at a distance of 20 km from Sevastopol. The technique worked flawlessly. It was more difficult with people. Commanders of all ranks began to feverishly find out who could be responsible for making the decision to open fire. For some reason, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral Oktyabrsky, began to call the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov in Moscow, although the fleet was not subordinate to Zhukov. Zhukov, evading any specific instructions, advised "to report to the People's Commissar of the Navy." The operational duty officer at the fleet headquarters (that night was the flagship chemist of the Black Sea Fleet, captain of the 2nd rank N.T. Rybalko), in turn, received the following instruction from Admiral Oktyabrsky: "Keep in mind that if there is at least one of ours in the *air airplane, you will be shot tomorrow.*" If you believe the memoirs of N.T. Rybalko, he and the chief of staff of the fleet, Rear Admiral I.D. Eliseev nevertheless decided to open fire on unknown aircraft. After that, the following conversation took place between Rybalko and the commander of the air defense of the fleet, Colonel I.S. Zhilin: "... *I immediately call Colonel Zhilin, I give the order to open fire. Colonel Zhilin replied: "Keep in mind that you are fully responsible for this order. I write it down in the war diary." I repeat the order of comrade. Zhilin and I say: "Write down where you want, I understand my responsibility, but open fire on the planes."* On this conversation

*ended with him..."*

True, Zhilin himself writes in his memoirs that neither from the chief of staff of the fleet, nor from the chief of staff of the Air Force of the Black Sea Fleet, Colonel Kalmykov, he could not get any specific instructions and he himself, at his own peril and risk, ordered the commanders of air defense units "all the aircraft that *appear in the area of Sevastopol, consider them as enemy, illuminate them with searchlights and open fire on them.* Even if such an order was actually issued, it was poorly carried out. The first bomber appeared over Sevastopol at 03:13 on 22 June. He was discovered and illuminated by searchlights, but at the same moment an order was received to turn off the searchlights and not open fire. Chief of Staff of the 61st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment I.K. Semyonov explained this by an order from the air defense headquarters of the fleet, but Zhilin refers to the fuzzy actions of the regiment commander himself. Be that as it may, the first Heinkel-111 dropped two heavy magnetic mines into the waters of the Sevastopol Bay and flew away with impunity. In total, 4 (four) German

Heinkel-111 bombers from the KG-27 air group based in Romania took part in the first raid on the main base of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. Aircraft went to the target one at a time, with large time intervals (15-25 minutes) and dropped bottom magnetic mines on parachutes. A total of 8 minutes were reset. These mines (more precisely, their parachutes) caused additional panic at the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, where it was decided that the enemy was throwing out an airborne assault with the aim of capturing the headquarters of the fleet. From the commanders who were in the headquarters building, a detachment was hastily created, which was instructed to take up all-round defense ...

The second, third and fourth "Heinkel" were fired upon by anti-aircraft artillery of the air defense of Sevastopol. A total of 2150 shells were fired (an average of 500 per enemy aircraft). In addition, the anti-aircraft artillery of the ships fired at the German bombers. Not a single aircraft was shot down, but the accuracy of dropping mines under the fire of Soviet anti-aircraft guns dropped sharply. Only one mine out of six hit the bay,

three mines exploded on land, and two fell in shallow water and automatically exploded. An entry in the combat log and the testimonies of many participants in the events indicate that the fourth bomber was shot down at 4.10 and fell into the sea, however, judging by German documents, the KG-27 group did not have irretrievable losses that day at all (in contrast, for example, from KG-55, which on June 22 irretrievably lost 11 He-111 aircraft in the sky over Western Ukraine) [245]. Such were the real events of the early morning of June 22,

1941 in Sevastopol. The newspaper "Krasny Krym" in an article entitled "So it was" described them on June 24, 1941 as follows:

*"... Numerous intersecting beams of searchlights continued to stubbornly search the sky covered with ominous clouds. And when a thick layer of clouds broke for a moment, the beams of searchlights overtook the robber cars in the gaps formed. In vain, floundering, rushing from side to side, the vultures tried to hide again behind thick clouds, under the cover of a dark night. The well-aimed artillery fire of our batteries was directed directly at the target ... The enemy unsuccessfully tried to hide behind the clouds, well-aimed fire overtook him everywhere.*

*Here is one of the robber planes, hit by a cannon shell, rushed up and, tumbling, engulfed in ever-growing flames, swiftly fell like a stone into the sea. The same fate soon befell another fascist bomber. The rest fled in panic. The German fascists who attacked Sevastopol received a worthy rebuff ... "*

And here is another description of the same events (we will not name the author of the memoirs): *"... at a quarter past four, the mighty beams of searchlights cut the cloudless starry sky and swayed like pendulums, feeling the sky, over which, growing with every second, a monotonous rumble spread. Finally, a fearsome armada of low-flying planes appeared from the sea . **Their endless rows of crows alternately swept** (underlined by me. - M.S.) along the Northern Bay. Batteries of coastal anti-aircraft artillery and ships of the squadron opened hurricane fire on them and mixed up the battle formation ... The gloomy silhouettes of still unknown bombers flashed in the beams of searchlights, then disappeared in the void of the sky, then they were again seized by searchlights and led to the end of the Northern Bay ... In the end it was several planes shot down. We clearly saw how one of the planes fell into the sea ... "*

Probably, the reader has already had a question - why all this story about the events on the Black Sea, so far from Leningrad and Finland? The answer is simple: without a clear understanding of the psychological atmosphere of the first day of the war, it is impossible to adequately read and understand the documents of that time and the memories of the participants in the events.

For example, the commander of the 1st brigade of submarines of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, captain of the 1st rank N.P. Egipko writes in his memoirs: *"In the*

*afternoon (June 22) over Ust-Dvinsk, where the submarine brigade was located, 15-20 aircraft with red stars on their wings flew towards Riga. I got a good look at these markings through binoculars. Somewhat later we heard explosions near the airfield near Riga. I, as a senior naval commander in Ust-Dvinsk, ordered to open anti-aircraft fire in the event of the return of enemy aircraft. But when returning, the planes went further into the sea, and anti-aircraft fire was unsuccessful ... "* [246].

Now let's move on from the memoirs to the original documents. The Combat Order (w / n) dated June 23, 1941, signed by the chief of staff of the 1st MK, Colonel Limarenko, says: *"Cases of raids by German aircraft with red stars have been recorded"* [249]. And in the order of the commander of the 163rd MD (1st MK) dated June 24, 1941, we read: *"Fascist aircraft use the coloring and signs of Soviet aircraft"* [250]. No less indicative is the following fragment from the Report on the combat operations of the Sortavala border detachment (signed by Captain Boldyrev on October 24, 1941): *"... Since June 24, enemy aircraft regularly began to make reconnaissance flights to our territory with a flight to a depth of 2–6 km. From June 28, 1941, enemy planes, taking advantage of the lack of active means of combat in the rear of the detachment's area, began to fire machine guns at settlements, trains, drop bombs on railway bridges and the canvas. **The absolute majority** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) of enemy aircraft flew with USSR identification marks ... "* [264]. What was it? With a probability close to 100%, it can be argued that Soviet identification marks **were never applied to combat**

**aircraft of the Luftwaffe and Finnish aviation**, and all reports of the first days of the war about the bombardment of positions of Soviet troops by red-star aircraft are the fruit of confusion and chaos. It's just that in some cases this confusion manifested itself in the appearance of reports based only on unverified rumors, in others - in the actual facts of the bombing of their own troops (however, there were no less cases of shelling their aircraft with anti-aircraft artillery). All of the above should not be understood as a call for indiscriminate denial of the authenticity of any documents from the first days of the war. Of course not - documents must be studied, their authenticity checked, compared with other known facts and documents. Not to reject "out of the blue", but also not to turn every letter of an archival document into an indisputable truth only on the grounds that the paper on which this "letter" is written has already turned yellow from time ...

### ***June 22, 1941 First day of the war***

Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front, signed by Major General Nikishev at 22.00 on June 22, 1941, occupies three pages of typewritten text [251]. **No mention of enemy air raids in the summary of the front headquarters**  
No.

As for the four fighter air divisions that directly covered Leningrad (5th IAD, 39th IAD, 3rd IAD, 54th IAD), in the time period of interest to us, only operational documents of the 39th IAD are available. The fund of the 54th IAD could not be found (perhaps this is due to the fact that on June 19, 1941, the USSR People's Commissar of Defense issued an order to reorganize the 3rd and 54th divisions into the 7th air defense fighter air corps of the country). The fund of the 3rd IAD contains only documents of the political department of a later period and still secret documents of the military prosecutor's office; operational documents stored in the fund of the 5th IAD, for some reason, begin on August 15, 1941 ...

In the operational summary of the 39th IAD (headquarters in Pushkin) No. 1 dated 6.00 June 23, 1941, we read: *"The 39th IAD from 2.30 June 22 to 6.00 June 23 did not make sorties, having units in combat readiness" [252]*. Reconnaissance report No. 01 dated 18.00 on June 22 states: *"Enemy aircraft in the area where division units are based are not marked."*

This is the information that the headquarters of the 39th IAD received independently. But in that part of intelligence report No. 01, which was based on information received from neighbors and / or higher headquarters, a description of two episodes of the war in the air appears: *"Five links of the Me-110 heading for Kronstadt, one link at an altitude of 1500 m, two links at an altitude of 70-80 m. During the shelling of our ZA and the appearance of our fighters, they went to Virolahti (a settlement on the coast of the Gulf of*

*Finland near the border. - M.S.). At 04:00, two three-engine enemy aircraft torpedoed vessels in the Kronstadt area, one enemy aircraft was shot down*

*by our ZA" [253]*. Most likely, the former commander of the Air Force of the Northern Front (Leningrad District) A.A. writes about the same two episodes in his memoirs. Novikov: *"... The war entered the city at 3 o'clock in the morning, when the Leningraders were still fast asleep. At this time, nine fighters flew high in the sky, led by Senior Lieutenant Mikhail Gneushev. Twenty minutes later, the first air battle broke out near Leningrad - fighter pilots Shavrov and Boyko entered the battle with the Me-110 link. At 4 o'clock in the morning, 12 German planes tried to mine the fairway in the Gulf of Finland, but were driven away by naval pilots. Somewhat later, 14 Me-109s made an attempt to storm one of our airfields near Vyborg. The enemy was met and driven off by a group of pilots of the 7th Fighter Aviation Regiment, led by Senior Lieutenant Nikolai Svitenko" [244]*.

In the well-known monograph "Under the Wing - Leningrad", written by Lieutenant Colonel I.G. Inozemtsev, the same events are described as follows: *"... At four o'clock in the morning, 12 aircraft in three groups raided the Kronstadt area and dropped mines into the waters of the Gulf of Finland. At the same time, 14 Me-110 twin-engine fighters appeared at low altitude near the airfield near the city of Vyborg. An alert unit of I-153 aircraft of the 7th Fighter Aviation Regiment took off to meet them, followed by four more fighters led by the squadron commander Senior Lieutenant P.I. Svitenko. The Soviet pilots attacked the Messerschmitts, who did not accept the battle. hurried to hide towards the Gulf of Finland..." [254]*. The episode with the twin-engine Me-110s is fictional from beginning to end. There

were no aircraft of this type in the 1st Air Force of the Luftwaffe at all. As part of the 5th V.f. they were, but four Me-110s from the Banak airfield in the far north of Norway could not fly to Vyborg even "one way". Neither in the Finnish Air Force, nor in the Luftwaffe units, at least occasionally appearing in June 41st at Finnish airfields, the Me-110 was never listed. Finally, the message about that looks completely implausible. that 14 Me-110s "hurried to escape" from one link (3 aircraft) of the I-153 biplanes, which were rather outdated by that time. If such a meeting had taken place in reality, then, most likely, the account of the losses of the Air Force of the Leningrad District would have been opened already in the early morning of June 22 ...

It is even difficult to imagine what real event could cause the rumors about "14 twin-engine fighters" to appear over Vyborg. Only the Dornier Do-215 (twin-engine and two-keel) had a certain external resemblance to the Me-110, and in the predawn twilight these aircraft could be confused. Two Do 215s were part of a long-range reconnaissance unit at the Finnish Luonetjärvi airfield. However, 2 is not 14, and long-range reconnaissance aircraft flew over the deep rear of the enemy at the highest possible high altitude. Neither at an altitude of 1500 m, nor even at an altitude of 70-80 m above the ground, long-range reconnaissance aircraft fly - this is both dangerous and impractical (the field of view of the enemy's territory is reduced). In the reports of the command of the border troops of the NKVD, "*endless*

*rows of crows*" from "*43 German aircraft*" appear at all, which at 3.50 on June 22 allegedly "*violated the border and headed for the Karelian Isthmus*" [264]. True, there are no material traces in the form of planes shot down and crashed on Soviet territory, bombs dropped, craters and destruction, this "*terrifying armada of low-flying*

*planes*" did not leave ...

"Two three-engine enemy aircraft", which allegedly "torpedoed ships in the Kronstadt area", they are also "12 German aircraft that tried to mine the fairway in the Gulf of Finland" - these are most likely the same 14 Junkers Ju-88s from the air groups KGr-806 and Kü.Fl.Gr-506, which at dawn on June 22 mined the approaches to the Kronstadt naval base, and after successfully completing the task ("*they were driven away by naval pilots*") only in the works of Soviet memoirists) landed for refueling at the Finnish Utti airfield .

The mining of the Kronstadt Bay was recorded (but, unfortunately, not stopped) by the command of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. The former commander of the KBF, Admiral V.F. Tributs writes in his memoirs: "... At 4 hours 45 minutes, the commander of the Kronstadt naval base, Rear Admiral V.I. Ivanov reported to me by telephone that he himself saw how several enemy planes dropped mines on the Kronstadt fairway and the open part of the Leningrad Sea Canal, and one of the planes fired at the Luga transport that was on the Krasnogorsk roadstead" [195] . The reliability of the raid on Kronstadt is beyond doubt, but it should be noted that a relatively

accurate description of the events is found only in the post-war memoirs of A.A. Novikov. Intelligence report No. 01 of the headquarters of the 39th IAD, written in the hot pursuit of events, contains very large inaccuracies: 2 aircraft instead of 14, "three-engine aircraft" (they could only be heavy transport Ju-52s) instead of twin-engine Ju-88 bombers, "torpedoing " instead of the actual dumping of deep mines. For the purposes of this study, it is more important to note that **the use of Finnish airfields to carry out a raid on Kronstadt is not mentioned in a single word by the compilers of intelligence report No. 01, nor by the former commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad District.** Most likely, the fact of landing and refueling of German aircraft at the Finnish Utti airfield was not at all known to the Soviet command.

Two episodes that occurred in the early morning, all recorded in known combat reports (or mentioned in post-war books)

actions in the sky over the Leningrad region and Karelia on the first day of the war are exhausted.

### ***June 23, 1941 Second day of the war***

On the night of June 22-23, the actions of German aviation in the sky over the northern approaches to Leningrad received the most irrefutable confirmation - a German bomber was shot down by anti-aircraft artillery. The plane crashed on Soviet territory, the crew in full force (4 people) was taken prisoner. This fact was succinctly and accurately recorded in the operational report No. 02 of the headquarters of the Northern Front from 10.00 on June 23: *"Eighth. 2nd Air Defense Corps raised. The firing positions reflected [in] during the night a raid of enemy aircraft [on] Leningrad. The anti-aircraft artillery of Karperesheik shot down one German aircraft" [255].*

In more detail - and much less reliably - this episode is described in combat report No. 1 of the headquarters of the Northern Air Defense Zone dated 8.00 on June 23: *"1. From 01 to 02 on June 23, enemy aircraft in two groups, consisting of up to 7-9 bombers each, tried at an altitude of 50-200 m to raid Leningrad points along the route: state border - Vyborg - Terioki [Zelenogorsk] . Met by fire from ZA in the Gorskaya-Sestroretsk area, one group changed course and left in the direction of Kronstadt, where 4 aircraft were shot down by fire from ZA KBF, which fell into the sea. The second group left in the direction of Art. Pesochnaya (25 km north of the center of Leningrad) and dropped a bomb near the military camp. There are no casualties or destruction. This group was fired upon by fire from the 2nd Air Defense Corps, as a result 2 aircraft were shot down. The scattered remnants of the enemy groups went northwest to Finland..." [256].*

The message about supposedly "airplanes that fell into the sea" corresponds to the Russian proverb "and ends in the water ...". As a rule, there is nothing to confirm the reliability of such reports. As for the second "shot down" in the area of st. Sand plane, this information can only be slightly exaggerated. According to the well-known Finnish aviation historian K. Geust, on the morning of June 23, one Junkers Ju-88 (crew commander - Lieutenant E. Satorius) from the 3rd squadron of the KGr-806 group was shot down over the Karelian Isthmus, and the second crashed at landing at the Finnish airfield Utti, while one of the crew members died. It is possible that the plane was damaged by Soviet anti-aircraft guns, which caused the accident during landing. A.A. Novikov also writes about one (not

two) German bomber shot down on the night of June 23: *"... On the night of June 23, an air raid signal sounded in the city of Lenin. For the first time, anti-aircraft guns also spoke. The 194th anti-aircraft artillery regiment of air defense met with its fire a group of Yu-88 bombers flying from the Gulf of Finland. Exactly at 00 hours 10 minutes the battery of Senior Lieutenant A.T. Pimchenkova shot down the first aerial vulture with a fascist swastika on its wings. The crew of the destroyed Yu-88 parachuted down and was taken prisoner..." [244].* Apart from conflicting reports of an air raid on the night of June 22-23, there

are no other reports of military operations in the sky over Leningrad in the documents of the Soviet command. The first shot down by fighters of the Air Force of the Northern Front

the German bomber was, indeed, shot down on June 23, but this happened 250 km from Leningrad. On the morning of June 23, the pilot of the 158th IAP, Lieutenant A.V. Chirkov, piloting the latest Yak-1 fighter at that time, shot down a German bomber in the area between Pskov and Ostrov (the pilot identified it as Heinkel-111, but there were no bombers of this type in service with the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe; most likely, it was a Junkers Ju-88). In any case, to the history of the use of Finnish airfields by German aviation, this episode

has no relation.

### ***June 24, 1941 Third day of the war***

No reports of combat clashes, air raids and bombings in this day did not arrive. In

the morning operational report No. 04 of the headquarters of the Northern Front dated 10.00 on June 24, we read: *"Fifth. The enemy Air Force continues to conduct reconnaissance in the direction of Leningrad with single aircraft and units. Air Force district in readiness for combat operations. Air defense aviation is patrolling the city of Leningrad. From 6.00 on June 23 to 6.00 on June 24, she made 231 flights. She had no encounters with enemy aircraft"* [257].

Evening opera summary No. 05 dated 22.00 on June 24 almost verbatim repeats the morning one in this respect: *"Seventh. Air Force combat readiness front. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft. Air defense aviation is patrolling over Leningrad"* [258].

We find similar messages in the operational reports of the formations of the Northern Front. Operations report of

the headquarters of the 23rd Army No. 04 dated 20.00 on June 24: *"... item 6 Meetings with air there was no enemy, no losses"* [259].

Operational reports No. 3, 4, 5 of the headquarters of the 39th IAD (the last - dated 18.00 on June 25) monotonously duplicate the same phrase: *"The units carried out air defense tasks by patrolling in the zones, the enemy was not detected, there were no air battles"* [260].

The operational reports of the headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps (the corps was deployed in the Vyborg region, i.e. in the immediate vicinity of the border with Finland) from June 23 to 28 inclusive contain a message stating that *"the corps did not establish contact with the enemy, air raids on units hulls from the side of the enemy were not produced"* [261]. The day of June 24, 1941

turned into night. Morning operational report No. 06 of the headquarters of the Northern Front from 10.00 on June 25 states: *"First. The night passed quietly. The troops of the Northern Front occupy the former areas with parts of the cover ...*

*... The 8th brigade on the Hanko Peninsula is unchanged. There were no encounters with the enemy. The enemy air force continues to conduct reconnaissance in the directions of Vyborg, Kexholm with single aircraft ... "* [262]. That's all

there was. To be more precise and correct, that's all. what was in June 1941 recorded in the documents of the Soviet command. By the standards and ideas of peacetime, one emergency after another took place in the sky over Leningrad. In comparison with what happened in the first three days of the war, from June 22 to 24 inclusive, in the zone of the North-Western, Western and South-Western fronts (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Western Ukraine),

Karelia and the Leningrad region could be considered a quiet, sleepy resort town, and even during the "dead season".

It will suffice to recall that in the zone of these three fronts, on the first day of the war alone, German aviation carried out about **4,000 sorties**. For one day. Dozens of airfields, railway stations, command posts and headquarters of the Red Army were subjected to multiple massive bombardments on June 22. Tank and motorized divisions of the Wehrmacht in a number of directions covered 200-250 km, thus reaching the deep rear of the grouping of Soviet troops in the western districts. The uncontrollable remnants of the former armies, corps and divisions began a disorderly retreat to the east. In the zone of the Western and Northwestern fronts, the situation was already beginning to acquire the features of an unprecedented military catastrophe. And from this "point of view", on the scale of such a catastrophe, at least the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24, 1941 begins to look strange, in which a grouping of German troops of "unspecified numbers" and German aviation, allegedly "systematically arriving on the territory of Finland", are declared a threat "acquiring decisive importance ...".

At the end of this chapter, it is worth mentioning one more episode, equally insignificant and unreliable. Nevertheless, for the information of the most inquisitive readers, it is necessary to tell about him.

In memoirs, there are references to the fact that on June 22-23, German planes bombed the Hanko naval base. Some authors write that it was in the morning, others - in the evening. Even numbers are called - 20 aircraft. On the other hand, there is no mention of the bombing of Hanko in the documents of the headquarters of the Northern Front.

Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of S.f. dated 22.00 June 22 *"Hanko peninsula part of combat readiness. Families of servicemen are evacuated on June 22 at 18.00 by the ship "Joseph Stalin""* [251].

Opersvodka No. 06 of the headquarters of S.f. dated 10 00 June 25 *"8th page brigade on the peninsula Hanko is unchanged. There were no clashes with the enemy..."* [262].

The first mention of hostilities on Hanko appears only in the operational summary of the headquarters of S.f. No. 08 of 7.00 on June 26, but even there it is only about shelling with ground artillery: *"The 8th brigade - on the night of June 26, the enemy opened rare artillery and mortar fire throughout the peninsula. Our aircraft and artillery are firing at enemy concentrations. The personnel of the base strengthens anti-tank and anti-personnel obstacles"* [283]. People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov in his memoirs also writes only about

"flights over Hanko" (*"at a meeting in the office of I.V. Stalin on the evening of June 24, I reported on the flights of Finnish and German aircraft over Hanko, on the bombardment of our ships in Polyarny ..."*), but not about the bombing of the naval base, which was subordinate to the fleet, respectively, N.G. Kuznetsov should have known about the bombing of Hanko before anyone else.

The testimony of a living eyewitness of the events sounds like this: *"... On the very first day of the war, German bombers appeared over the peninsula. I saw only one flight of three aircraft and I assume that the bombs were dropped without a definite predetermined target. Whether there were more planes I do not know, but the raid lasted only a few minutes in the morning and did not repeat itself during the day. Dropped bombs, as they say, where*



*horrible. Actually, it didn't get anywhere. The entire garrison was in safe shelters... The Germans repeated another fruitless bombardment the next day..." [189].*

According to the author of this book, the most likely explanation for the events of the morning of June 22 at Khanko will be the bombing of the base by one flight (three aircraft) from the KBF Air Force. It was at this time (in the early morning of June 22) that the Baltic Fleet aircraft bombed Finnish ships and fortifications on the Aland Islands (and this is very close to Hanko).

In an endless labyrinth of coastal skerries, the commander of one link made a mistake in choosing a target and dropped bombs aimlessly on the wrong

peninsula. The option with the appearance of German bombers over Hanko seems extremely doubtful for the simplest reason - why? This base (i.e. the springboard for the landing of Soviet troops) was a problem for the Finns, but not for the Germans. The naval base of Hanko did not interfere with the Germans. Absolutely. The German fleet did not plan to break into the Gulf of Finland, but was engaged in the exact opposite business - it mined the entrance to the bay. On the morning of June 22, the Luftwaffe had no "extra" aircraft, extra crews, and extra bombs. To risk planes and pilots (from airfields in East Prussia to Hanko about 600-700 km "one way", therefore, it will not be possible to cover bombers with fighters) out of "solidarity" with a future ally (Finland) the Germans hardly began. Throughout the war, not a single German aircraft and not a single German ship even approached Hanko. In any case, this issue requires further study.

## Chapter 3.6

### SHIELD AND SWORD

In the early morning of June 25, 1941, combat aircraft of the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet crossed the Finnish border. Before proceeding to a presentation of the course of this operation, the tasks set and the results achieved, it is necessary to familiarize yourself as accurately as possible with the

composition and deployment of the forces of the parties (see map No. 11). The bomber forces of the aviation of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) were relatively small (small in comparison with the huge number of fighter aircraft that defended the air approaches

to the "second capital" of the USSR). In the immediate vicinity of Leningrad, **the 41st BAD** (headquarters in Gatchina) was based, which included four bomber regiments. On June 22, 1941, the division commander, Colonel Novikov, issued combat order No. 1, according to which the regiments of the division were dispersed at operational airfields: 10th BAP - Gorodets airfield. 201st BAP - Sumy airfield, 202nd BAP - Kerstovo airfield, 205th BAP - Kresttsy airfield [265]. The 10th bomber was an "old" personnel aviation regiment that took part in the "winter war" and was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Battle for the "feats" committed in that war. The 201st, 202nd and 205th regiments were relatively "young" - their formation began at the end of 1940. However, one should not think that the "young" regiments were staffed only by graduates of flight schools - the command staff, as a rule, was made up of pilots with extensive combat experience. So, in the 202nd BAP *"regiment commander Colonel N.F. Efimov was awarded the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner, the navigator of the regiment, Major G.I. Gabunia was awarded two Orders of the Red Banner. Squadron commanders, their deputies and navigators also had government awards ... All of them had significant service and combat experience gained in the skies of Spain, in battles on Lake Khasan, the Khalkhin-Gol River, in the war with the White Finns and during the liberation campaign in western Ukraine and western Belorussia..."* [266].

A characteristic feature of the "200th" regiments was that, when fully equipped with flight personnel, they had a relatively small number of combat aircraft. Judging by the memoirs of the former commander of the Air Force of the Northern Front, A.A. Novikov, the 41st BAD was armed with 114 aircraft [244]. Most likely, the air marshal named the total number of aircraft, including those temporarily out of order. The documents of the fund of the 41st BAD indicate the exact number of combat-ready aircraft in the regiments of the division as of June 27, 1941 [267]. There is no earlier information (for June 22 or 25). Nevertheless, summing up the number of aircraft remaining on June 27, 1941 with the number of combat losses, we get the following minimum (precisely "minimal", since in addition to combat losses there could also be technical malfunctions and accidents) figures: 10th BAP 38 " SB"

201st BAP                    25 "SB"  
 202nd BAP                    19 "SB"  
 205th BAP 13 "SB" in total in

the 41st BAD: 95 **The**

**2nd air division** was based significantly south of Leningrad (headquarters in Staraya Russa). The division included three bomber (2nd, 44th and 58th BAP) and one assault (65th ShAP) air regiment. The presence of an assault regiment transferred this division to the category of "mixed", and in most documents it is referred to as the 2nd SAD. In fact, no mention of the participation of the 65th ShAP, armed with I-15 bis light biplane fighters, was found in the air strike on Finland, and in reality the 2nd SAD acted as a bomber formation. This division, the old personnel division of the Soviet Air Force, was both quantitatively and qualitatively better equipped than the 41st BAD. Two of its regiments (2nd and 58th) had already received the latest Ar-2 and Pe-2 dive bombers at that time.

As of June 23, 1941, the division was based: the headquarters of the 58th BAP at the St. Russa. 44th BAP at the Tuleblya and Ivanovka airfields, 2nd BAP at the Kresttsy airfield (all in the Novgorod region). The number of combat-ready aircraft, indicated on the basis and documents of the headquarters of the bomber regiments, is given in the table: [268].

	<b>combat-ready aircraft Total</b>	
2nd BAP	23 SB + 21 Ar-2	44
44th BAP	+ 3 Pe-2	46
58th BAP	38 SB + 14 "Pe-2"	52
in total, in the 2nd		142

SAD, **the 55th SAD** (headquarters in Petrozavodsk) included one bomber aviation regiment (72nd BAP), which was armed with 45 SB bombers (of which 40 were in good condition) and 4 new Pe -2.

Total - 44 combat-ready aircraft (data as of June 1, 1941) [269]. Thus, the Air

Force of the Northern Front could use **about 280 serviceable bombers in a massive air strike on Finnish airfields**. A characteristic feature of the bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front was a significant excess of the number of crews (about 450) over the number of serviceable aircraft [269]. We emphasize once again that all figures characterizing the number and technical condition of combat aircraft should be considered

only as indicative, which differ with a spread of 10-15% even in the documents of the same division. And this is not surprising - an aircraft in military aviation is a consumable item that is constantly updated, broken, repaired, etc. Accordingly, it is in principle impossible to indicate the absolutely exact number of combat-ready aircraft.

**The Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet** (commanded by Major General of Aviation V.V. Ermachenkov) had three bomber regiments: the 1st MTAP (mine torpedo regiment), the 57th BAP, and the 73rd BAP. The first two were part of the 8th

bomber brigade and were based at the airfields Bezzabotnoye and Kotly (30-70 km west of Leningrad) BAP were long-range bombers DB-3 / DB-3f, which from the indicated airfields could reach almost any point in southern and central Finland. The 73rd BAP (five squadrons armed with SB and Ar-2 bombers) was based at the Pärnu airfield in Estonia. In total, these three aviation regiments of the KBF Air Force were armed with **174 combat-ready aircraft**, of which 91 were DB-3, 66 were SB, and 17 were Ar-2 [270, 271, 277]. In all countries (and the Soviet Union was no exception), naval aviation is the elite of the Armed Forces. The reason for this is very simple: "the sea does not forgive." Neither I-16 nor DB-3 could

make an emergency landing on the water. And a parachute over the northern seas does not help much - a person does not live long in the icy water of the winter Baltic or the Barents Sea. The very first mistake in piloting, loss of orientation, poor-quality pre-flight preparation of the aircraft become the last for the crew of naval aviation. That is why there are no weak pilots in the aviation of the Navy. And among all the formations of naval aviation, it was the KBF Air Force that had the greatest combat experience, and this experience was acquired on the same theater of operations, which was to operate in June 1941. The ports of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia (Helsinki, Turku, Vaasa, Pori, Kotka ) were invariably present in all pre-war operational plans of the Baltic Fleet Air Force as top-priority bombing targets. Since the "winter war" there were two more "priority objects" - the Finnish coastal defense battleships "Ilmarinen" and "Väinämöinen" (there were simply no other large surface ships in the Finnish Navy), which in December 1939 could not be sunk , nor damage. They prepared very hard for a new war in the skies over the Baltic. Here is what the former navigator of the 1st MTAP, Lieutenant General P.I., writes about this in his memoirs. Khokhlov: "... *The previous studies and*

*military operations ("winter war". - M.S.) yielded results. Crews were able to fly during the day in the ranks of units, and two squadrons could fly at night, in simple weather conditions ... Sniper crews for bombing and mine laying appeared in the regiment. Many flights were carried out using radio navigation aids. DB-3 aircraft were already equipped with RPK-2 radio semi-compasses, which were competently used in flights. The most trained crews mastered flights in the clouds. On average, each crew flew more than 200 hours in 1940 "* (**emphasized** by me - M.S.) [134]. 200 hours of annual flight time is a very worthy indicator. Especially against the background of the plaintive sighs that continue in the domestic pseudo-historical literature about the fact that the flight crew of Soviet aviation in the summer of 41 consisted of "yellow-mouthed

chicks", half-educated cadets with a flight time of 4 hours a year "on a box" ...

**Fighter aviation of Finland** was the largest part of the small Air Force of this country. Organizationally, the Finnish fighters were consolidated into five relatively complete air groups.

1. **LLv-24**, commander Major G. Magnusson. It was the most experienced and most productive (according to the results of the "winter war") fighter group of the Finnish Air Force. The LLv-24 included four squadrons (an unusually large number), three of which (25 aircraft) were based at the Vesivehmaa airfield (near the city of Lahti), and one - at the Selyanpää airfield near the Kouvola railway station (in Soviet documents, this airfield is often referred to as "Valkeala" - after the name of the nearby settlement). In total, the LLv-24 group was armed with **33 American-made Brewster fighters**.

2. **LLv-26**, Commander Major R. Haryu-Yenti. All three squadrons of the group were based at the Joroinen airfield (20 km southeast of the Pieksämäki railway station). The LLv-24 group was armed with **26 Italian-made Fiat G-50 fighters**.

3. **LLv-28**, commander captain S.I. Sirin. Three squadrons of the group were based at the Naarajärvi airfield (8 km west of Pieksämäki station). The group was armed with **27 French-made Moran MS-406 fighters**.

4. **LLv-32**, commander captain E. Heinil. This air group, with its meager forces, was supposed to cover the capital of the state and the important railway junction of Riihimäki-Hyvinkä. Two squadrons of the LLv-32 air group were based at the Hyvinkä airfield (40 km north of Helsinki). They were armed with Dutch-made **Fokker D-21** fighters, outdated by the time of the Winter War. The fighters of the group, in addition, were physically very worn out, because these were "Fokkers" manufactured under license at a factory in Tampere in the spring and summer of 1939 and passed through the entire war. As a result, out of 24 fighters of the LLv-32 group, only 12 were in combat readiness on June 25, 1941.

5. **LLv-30**, commander captain L. Bremer. The group consisted of three squadrons, of which only one (2nd) was fully equipped with aircraft. Two squadrons, armed with **18 Fokker D-21 fighters** (assembled in Tampere after the Winter War and equipped with a more powerful American PWR-1830 engine), were based at the airfield of the port city of Pori. The 1st squadron of the LLv-30 group was based at the Hollola airfield (Lahti area). It was armed with **5 English-made Hurricane fighters**.

In addition to the above-mentioned five fighter groups, there were three more understaffed even to half the regular strength of the group, the squadrons of which were scattered throughout southern Finland. The 2nd squadron of the LLv-12 group, which was armed with **3 Gladiators** (an English biplane fighter outdated by the time of the Winter War), was based at the Puumapa airfield (50 km east of Mikkeli). The 3rd squadron of the LLv-12 group, armed with **7 Fokkers**, was based at the Mikkeli airfield. The 1st squadron of the LLv-14 group

was based at the Utti airfield (area of the Kouvola railway station). She was armed with **6 "Gladiators"**. The 3rd squadron of the LLv-14 group was based at the Padasjoki airfield (45 km north of Lahti). She was armed with **6 Fokkers. 5 fighters** (captured Soviet I-153) were part of the 3rd squadron of the LLv-6 group, based at the airfield of the city of Turku [311].

Two more squadrons (1 / LLv-12 at the Joroinen airfield and 2 / LLv-14 at the Valkeala airfield) were in reserve, since at the end of June 1941 they were re-equipped with the conditionally "new" American Hawk P-36 fighters.

In total, the fighter units of the Finnish Air Force had **160 aircraft** of eight different types, of which **148 units** were in combat readiness by June 25, 1941. A third of all fighters (52 serviceable aircraft) were fairly battered veterans of the "winter war": the Dutch "Fokkers" and the English "gladiators". It should immediately be noted that in the summer of 1941 there was not a single German Messerschmitt in service with the Finnish Air Force (the first Bf-109G-2 in the amount of 30 units were purchased by Finland only in the spring of 1943).

The depressing variety of aircraft and aircraft engines was not the only problem facing the technical services of the Finnish air regiments. Repair and maintenance of aviation equipment had to be carried out practically without original factory spare parts. The reason for this becomes clear if we recall the origin of the Finnish Air Force fighter aircraft.

The best thing was the case with the Fokkers. The defeat and occupation of Holland by the Wehrmacht did not immediately affect the situation in the Finnish Air Force, since Finland prudently bought a license for the unlimited production of Fokkers at the state-owned aircraft factory in Tampere in the summer of 1937. However, both for "unlimited" and for the most minimal production of aircraft, engines were needed. Of course, there was no own aircraft engine production in Finland. First, the English Bristol-Mercury engines were installed on the Finnish-assembled Fokkers, and then the much more powerful American R-1830 Twin Wasp engines. After the occupation of Norway and the emergence of German military and naval bases a few kilometers from the Finnish port of Petsamo, the transport corridor between Finland and the Atlantic was practically closed. Thus, the possibility of obtaining new British or American engines, aircraft and

spare parts for them decreased almost to zero, of course, the steady German-Finnish rapprochement, which did not remain a secret either for London or for Washington, also influenced the curtailment of cooperation. As for the receipt of French aircraft, the deliveries ceased simultaneously with the liquidation of independent France itself. True, in the future (1941-1942), the Germans sold Finland (sold for money, but not at all as a gift out of a sense of allied solidarity) captured "morans" (57 aircraft) and American "hawks" (44 aircraft), captured by them during fighting in France. Until the spring of 1943, this "thin stream" of supplies of extremely worn out, battle-damaged aircraft was one of the two available sources for updating the Finnish Air Force aircraft fleet. The second source was captured Soviet fighters and engines with

them.

A detailed analysis of the performance characteristics of Finnish Air Force fighters goes far beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we restrict ourselves to only the briefest review.

The Fokker D-21 fighter was designed as an easy to operate, reliable and cheap fighter for the colonial troops of the Dutch West Indies. It was the desire for maximum simplification and reduction in the cost of the design that predetermined the use of a non-retractable landing gear, which for the aircraft of the second half of the 30s was already an obvious anachronism. In terms of armament (4 rifle-caliber machine guns) and engine power (750 hp), this fighter corresponded to early modifications of the famous Soviet "donkey" (I-16, type 10),

but at the same time it was noticeably heavier (2050 kg versus 1716 kg), had less speed and rate of climb than the I-16.

The French Moran MS-406 fighter first took to the air on August 8, 1935. It was one of the world's first fighters of the "new wave" ("sharp-nosed" high-speed monoplane fighters with liquid-cooled engines and retractable landing gear) and the very first serial fighter with cannon weapons. The first could not become the best: the main congenital defect of this aircraft was the discrepancy between the engine power and the weight of the structure. The table below shows that even in comparison with the heaviest modification of the I-16 type 28, armed with two , with less than 200 hp engine power, was half a ton heavier. As a result, the power-to-weight ratio of the Moran MS-406 turned out to be one and a half times less than that of the I-16, which predetermined low acceleration and maneuvering characteristics.

In order to somehow "hold out" the maximum speed of the aircraft to the coveted mark of 500 km / h, an unprecedented engine cooling radiator retractable into the fuselage was used on the Moran. As a result, with the radiator released into the air stream, the Moran did not gain even 450 km / h, but with the radiator removed, the engine quickly "boiled". In addition, the Moran's gas tank had no tread, the pilot's seat had armored backs, and the hydraulic system turned out to be very capricious. The very first air battles with the German "Messerschmitts" convinced the French command that the "Moran" had grown old, without having had time to really be born. In the spring of 1940, French fighter air groups began to re-equip at a feverish pace with more advanced aircraft. In just three weeks, from May 10 to June 5, six fighter groups of French aviation "were freed" from the Morans, transferring to the Devuatin D-520, Bloch MB-152 and the American Hawk.

For Finnish aviation, the Moran (the first planes arrived in February 1940 and managed to take part in the Winter War) was a precious gift. This fighter was able to catch up with the Soviet SB bomber in the air, and the gun made it possible to use the fighter for effective attack on ground targets.

And later, during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war, the "moran" was used as a "fighter-attack aircraft", in particular, to fight on railway communications (a 20-mm cannon pierced the walls of a steam locomotive boiler from a short distance). Another "advantage" of the French veteran in the Finnish service was that the M-100/M 103/M-105 aircraft engines installed on the Soviet SB, Ar-2 and Pe-2 bombers, Yak and LaGG fighters, were a forced licensed version motor "Hispano-Suiza" 12Y-31, installed on the "morans". Thus, among the wreckage of downed Soviet aircraft, the Finns received a rich source of spare parts for Moran engines ...

The Italian Fiat S-50, the American Hawk and Brewster, the Soviet I-16, for all their outward dissimilarity, were aircraft of the same class and one generation: maneuverable fighters of the late 30s with an air-cooled engine. The latest modifications of the I-16, thanks to a powerful engine and a record low weight (as a result, a uniquely high thrust-to-weight ratio), surpassed their "peers" in terms of horizontal and vertical maneuverability, while not inferior in speed. The advantage of the "Americans" was aerodynamic perfection (significantly lower coefficient

aerodynamic drag), due to which they surpassed the "donkey" in the ability to accelerate in a dive, as well as a large fuel supply, traditional for all US Air Force aircraft, respectively - a large (huge by the standards of the Soviet Air Force) flight range. It is also worth noting that the "Fiat" and "Brewster", armed with heavy machine guns, undoubtedly surpassed the machine gun modifications of the "donkey" (I-16 type, 18 and type 24) in terms of firepower. **Power Speed Weight Take-off speed, Range Armament vertical. takeoff empty m/min hp**

	Weight		Maksim.			
"Moran" MS-406	1900 2470	860	490	667	800	1x20 + 2x7.5
"I-16" type 28	1403 1988	1100	470	882	445	2x20 + 2x7.62
"Hawk" P-36	2121 2600	1050	490	930	1200	6x7.7
Fiat G 50	1963 2403	840	473	?	670	2x12.7
Brewster 2104 3103 B-239		950	487	?	1500	3x12.7 + 1x7.7
I-16 type 24	1383 1780	1100	489	938	440	4x7.62

In general, the fighter aircraft of the Finnish Air Force in terms of the main performance characteristics were quite consistent with the so-called "obsolete" Soviet fighters (I-16 and I-153) of the beginning of the war. The difference, and the difference is striking, was in the history of their combat use. Thousands of "donkeys" and "gulls" were abandoned at the border airfields in the very first days and weeks of the war, while "brewsters", "fiats" and "morans" continued to fight successfully until the summer of 1944, and the Finnish pilots, piloting these "museum exhibits", continued to shoot down everything they saw in the air: the new Soviet Yak-9 and La-5, the American Lend-Lease Cobras and Kittyhawks ... On July 29, 1944, Sergeant V. Rinkeneva, piloting the Chaika » I-153, shot down the Aerocobra R-39. This is not a "hunting story", but a real fact, and the downed plane was found on the ground in the area of st. Loimola [52]. Now, from the discussion of tactical and technical characteristics, let's return to the issue of basing Finnish fighter aircraft, which is more relevant

for this chapter. Having placed all the above-mentioned fighter groups and squadrons on a geographical map, we find only **seven "airfield nodes"**:

- district st. Pieksämäki, Naarajärvi and Joroinen airfields, 53 fighters in total: - Lahti region, Vesivehmaa, Hollola and Padasjoki airfields, 36 fighters in total; - the area of the city of Pori, the airfield of Pori, a total of 18 fighters; - district st. Kouvola, Valkeala (Settlement) and Utti airfields, 14 fighters in total; - area of Helsinki, Hyvinkä airfield, a total of 12 serviceable fighters;
- Mikkeli area, Mikkeli and Puumala airfields, 10 fighters in total; - the area of the city of Turku, the airfield of Turku, a total of 5 fighters.



All fighter aviation was based at 12 airfields. If we exclude such airfields from this list, on which only 3-8 aircraft were based, then exactly **five airfields will remain**: Naarajärvi (27 aircraft), Joroinen (26 aircraft), Vesivmehma (25 aircraft), Pori (18 aircraft) and Hyvinkä (12 aircraft). The concentration of aviation on such a small number of airfields undoubtedly created a dangerous situation for the Finnish side - the fighter groups themselves turned into a target for a devastating air strike. Comparing the number of airfields with the number of

bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Fleet and the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, it is easy to see that the Soviet command could allocate two regiments of bombers to attack each of the five main airfields of the Finnish Air Force, while covering them with three regiments of fighters ...

It is rather difficult to understand the logic of just such a distribution of fighter aviation forces. The capital of the state and the two largest (by Finnish standards) cities (Turku and Tampere) are covered by disproportionately small forces. The largest group of fighters (two air groups, a third of all combat-ready aircraft) is located in the area of st. Pieksämäki, 200-250 km from the border, from Helsinki and Tampere. One gets the impression that the Finnish leadership, not excluding the possibility of a surprise massed strike by the Soviet Union, pulled the main forces of fighter aircraft deep into the country.

This decision becomes clear if we again turn to the geographical map. The capital of Finland, the most important ports, railway lines and junction stations are located on the coast of the Gulf of Finland or in close proximity to it. From the point of view of building an air defense system, this circumstance creates a huge problem. The fact is that in the absence of radars (and in the summer of 1941, there were no radars in the air defense of Finland), the entire air attack warning system was based on the use of many hundreds of visual observation posts (supplemented in the most important directions with noise direction-finding installations). So, for example, the air defense of Leningrad included 263 VNOS observation posts ("air surveillance, communication warning") and 23 separate fighter aviation guidance posts (and this is in addition to eight radar stations!). The Moscow air defense system had seven radar stations and 610 VNOS posts. It was not possible to place a comparable number of VNOS posts in the waters of the Gulf of Finland; accordingly, an enemy aircraft could appear over the airfield in the suburbs of Helsinki or Turku before the air raid siren sounds.

In any case, the deployment of the Finnish Air Force forces, which actually existed on June 25, 1941, is absolutely **incompatible with the version that the Finnish army was already deployed in June 1941 to invade** the Soviet Karelo-Finland. Aviation, as we can see, turned out to be many hundreds of kilometers from the area of the future offensive of the ground forces of the Finnish army (it began on July 10 in Ladoga Karelia, in the Joensuu-Ilomantsi zone). So they don't prepare for the attack. On the eve of June 22, 1941, the Germans deployed their fighter groups at a distance of only a few tens of kilometers from the Soviet border, after the start of the invasion, the fighter groups "clung" literally close to the front line. Often, Luftwaffe fighters landed on airfields (former Soviet ones), which were located a few kilometers from covered bridges and crossings.

Completely similar tactics were followed by the command of the Finnish Air Force. In the "Reference on Accounting for the Battles of the Patriotic War on the Front of the 23rd Army" signed on December 15, 1941, we read: *"It should be noted that enemy aircraft had their airfields much closer to the battlefield than our aircraft, and appeared over the target much faster, how our fighters arrived"* [313]. And if the Finnish command had already decided in mid-June to go on the offensive, then the fighter groups would have turned out to be much east of those airfields where they were caught (more precisely, should have been caught) by a Soviet air strike.

All of the above in no way suggests that the destruction of Finnish aviation at base airfields could become a simple and "win-win" operation. Finnish aviation, of course, was outnumbered by the bomber forces of the Air Forces of the Northern Front and the Baltic Fleet (approximately in the proportion of 3 to 1), but this simple arithmetic by no means guarantees success. The very task of destroying (or at least significantly weakening) enemy aircraft in the course of the first few strikes on airfields is extremely difficult. This question deserves a separate discussion, because for many years in Soviet historical propaganda (or "propaganda history" - whichever you prefer), a legend has developed about super-efficiency, allegedly inherent in this tactic. In the entire Soviet "mythology of war" there was, perhaps, no myth more rooted and rooted than the myth of "a sudden crushing blow to airfields." Before bringing down another tedious stream of figures and facts on the reader, we will cite two rather characteristic fragments from literary (one might even say fantastic) works : *ranks of standing fighters. In a second they were already above them, and a shower of two-kilogram fragmentation bombs poured from their belly. Hot fragments crashed into the wings and fuselages, pierced gas tanks ... Streams of burning gasoline flooded one fighter after another. The three Heinkel 111s turned lazily and circled once more over the airfield, spraying machine-gun fire into the burning wreckage as the stunned pilots jumped out of their beds. In two minutes, the division as a combat unit ceased to exist ... The division commander stood among the rubble and cried ... "* [273].

*"... The flight personnel of the aviation units that were attacked showed perseverance. The officers rushed to the cars, despite the explosions of bombs and the machine-gun fire of attack aircraft. They pulled planes out of burning hangars. The fighters took off running across the cratered field towards the impenetrable wall of smoke screen and the continuous glare of explosions. Many immediately overturned in craters, others flew up, thrown up by bomb explosions, and fell in a pile of burning debris ... And yet, some managed to take off. With the courage of blind despair and malice, no longer following any plan, out of order, they entered into battles ... "* [274].

Comparison of the content (and even style) of these two texts allows us to immediately clarify the concepts

under discussion. War is an armed confrontation **between two sides, two opponents, each of which**, in order to achieve victory, shows "perseverance", "courage", sometimes - "malice" caused by "blind despair". Precisely as one of the tactical

methods of warfare and an air strike against enemy airfields should be considered. If the pilots of one of the parties are sleeping soundly like innocent babies and only their commander does not sleep, but cries bitterly; if the planes refueled (!) with fuel, without any supervision and protection, are lined up in "long lines" on an airfield abandoned by personnel, then this is not a war. It should be called something else (criminal negligence, malicious violation of the Charters and Instructions, mass desertion, betrayal), but no "war". And in order to destroy the "long lines" of abandoned aircraft, even three "lazy" bombers are too much luxury. It would be easier and cheaper to send a dozen saboteurs armed with "sharpening" (for piercing gas tanks) and matches (for setting fire to "streams of gasoline pouring from holes"). If, however, we discuss an attack on airfields in terms and categories of war (that is, taking into account the inevitable

opposition of an armed enemy), then this tactic appears to be a very complex, costly and risky undertaking. Why? First of all, because the most important component of combat aviation is not aircraft, but pilots. A strike on airfields - even the most

successful for the attacking side - only leads to the destruction of aircraft. And aircraft in aviation (we repeat this once again) are nothing more than consumables. The attacking side loses in the air over the airfield **not only planes, but also pilots**. Moreover, **it loses irretrievably** - a pilot shot down over the airfield will either die (it is almost impossible to use a parachute on a low-level flight), or will be captured. Both that and another in military language is called "irretrievable loss".

Secondly, it is much more difficult to destroy an aircraft on the ground than in the air. The flying object is vulnerable in flight. A single hole in the engine cooling radiator, a single control rod, interrupted by a fragment of an anti-aircraft shell, a piece of the elevator skin, torn out by a shell rupture of the smallest-caliber air gun, will lead to a fall or, in the most favorable case, to an emergency landing, in which the aircraft, likely to be completely destroyed. If this landing takes place on enemy territory (and during a raid on an enemy airfield, this is likely to happen), then the downed aircraft will go into the category of "irretrievable losses". Again, together with an extremely scarce pilot in the war. An aircraft standing on the ground can be irretrievably destroyed only if it is directly hit by an air bomb.

Shrapnel "wounds" from an aerial bomb that exploded to the side put the plane out of action, **but only for the duration of the repair**. And this time - depending on the severity of the damage, the equipment and qualifications of the repair services - can be only a few days or even a few hours. Is it easy to achieve a direct hit with a bomb on an aircraft? According to the data of the Main Directorate of the Red Army Air Force, the crew of the SB bomber, when bombing from a height of 2 km, on average achieved 39% of the dropped bombs in a rectangle of 200 by 200 meters, and the average circular deviation from the aiming point was 140 meters [269]. Simply put, there was no question of any targeted bombing on such a point target as an airplane. Moreover, for targeted bombing, you need to see the target - but with this, in the event of a strike on airfields, there are big problems.

The simplest camouflage nets (or even a simple bunch of green branches) in combination with decoys (simple and cheap, knocked together from plywood, boards and cardboard, mock-ups of aircraft) make the task of visually detecting an aircraft on the ground almost unsolvable. This "almost" could be realized only by descending to extremely low altitudes (50-100 m), which is not at all simple (there were no automatic terrain tracking machines at that time) and very dangerous (at such an altitude, an aircraft can even be shot down by a dense rifle fire). But that's not all - in order to exclude the destruction of the aircraft by fragments of the bomb dropped by it, the bombing had to be carried out either from a height of more than 300-500 meters, or using a delayed action fuse. However, the latter method turned out to be even less effective, since a horizontally flying bomb, after being dropped from an extremely low altitude, ricocheted and fell at a completely random point.

The high-explosive aerial bomb FAB-100 (the most massive ammunition of Soviet bomber aviation) left a funnel with a diameter of 10-15 meters in the ground. A hundred mobilized men from a neighboring village could fill it up in half an hour. Manually. With the use of technology, it was even easier to restore the unpaved runway destroyed by the raid. Again, it must be borne in mind that the I-16 fighter of the modifications mentioned above (type 24, type 28) had a takeoff speed of 130 km / h, a takeoff run of 210 m, and a runway of 380 m. The runway for fighters of this class could serve as a flat clearing, compacted with a skating rink or lined with easily removable metal panels. Therefore, attempts to disable the airfield by destroying unpaved runways would be even more costly and ineffective ... It is worth noting that the legend about the super-effectiveness of the strike on airfields was invented by Soviet "historians"

retroactively. It was invented when it was necessary to find relatively decent explanations for the terrible defeat of the Soviet Air Force in the summer of 1941. The very limited possibilities of this tactical technique were well known to military specialists long before June 22, 1941. Already on the basis of studying the experience of the war in Spain, absolutely correct conclusions were drawn: "... In the first period of the war, both sides

conducted intensive operations on airfields *in order to gain dominance in the air. Subsequently, however, they **almost completely abandoned*** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) *from this. Experience has shown that operations on airfields produce very limited results.*

*Firstly, because aviation is dispersed at airfields (no more than 12–15 aircraft per airfield) and is well camouflaged; secondly, airfields are covered by anti-aircraft artillery and machine guns, which forces attacking aircraft to drop bombs from a high altitude with a low probability of hitting; thirdly, the damage to the airfield by air bombs is so insignificant that it almost does not delay the departure of enemy aircraft; minor damage to the airfield was quickly repaired. a broken connection*

*recovered.*

*Very often, bombers dropped bombs on an empty airfield, as enemy aircraft had time to take to the air in advance. For example, in July 1937, the rebels made **70 raids** on the airfield in Alcala **in groups of up to 35***

**aircraft.** As a result of these raids, **2 people were injured**, two planes and a truck were destroyed ...” [275].

Spain was followed by fighting in China and at Khalkhin Gol. New combat experience again showed that a strike on airfields, while remaining an important component of the struggle for air supremacy, was by no means a miracle cure. allowing one wave of the "magic wand" to destroy enemy aircraft. At a well-known meeting of the PKKA senior command staff on December 23-31, 40, combat experience was summarized as follows:

G.P. Kravchenko: *"The main thing is air combat... I am based on my own experience. During the operations at Khalkhin Gol, in order to defeat only one airfield, I had to fly out several times as part of a regiment. I took off with 50-60 aircraft, while at this airfield there were only 17-18 aircraft. CM. Budyonny: "You said about losses at airfields, but what is the ratio in losses at airfields and in the air?"*

G.P. Kravchenko: *"I believe that the ratio between the losses at the airfields will be as follows: in particular, I did not have Khalkhin Gol - 1/8 of the part I destroyed on the ground and 7/8 in*

*the air."* G.M. Stern: *"And about the same ratio in other places"* [276].

Similar patterns emerged during the famous Battle of Britain. Thus, in the first four days of the German air offensive, from 12 to 15 August 1940, Luftwaffe pilots destroyed **47 British fighters** at the cost of losing **122 of their own aircraft**. The next "round" of combat in the skies over RAF airfields took place from 23 August to 7 September. The British then lost 277 fighters, but the Germans also lost 378 aircraft of all types. Taking into account the fact that many English pilots managed to use a parachute and land safely on their own territory, the ratio of pilot losses (during different periods of the "Battle of Britain") was 5 to 1 or even 7 to 1. Of course, not in favor of the attacking side. Returning to the real history of the Great Patriotic War, we can also state more than eloquent facts. Throughout

the war, the losses of Soviet Air Force aircraft at airfields were the smallest category of losses. Specifically, in 1942, 1943, 1944, **204, 239, 210 aircraft were irretrievably lost from enemy attacks on airfields, respectively, which amounted to 2.47%, 2.52%, 2.68%** of the total number of irretrievable losses [269]. In other words, on a huge front of the war, the huge number (at least 10 thousand combat aircraft) of the Soviet military aviation lost less than one aircraft per day from strikes on airfields! Such low losses are by no means connected with the fact that the enemy has completely abandoned attacks on airfields. For example, in 1944, 1,416 sorties by German aviation were recorded, the purpose of which was to attack Soviet airfields [269]. Thus, **to destroy one aircraft** of the Soviet Air Force on the ground, **the enemy spent 6.7 sorties**. Somehow these facts are poorly combined with entertaining stories about "three lazily deployed Heinkels that destroy an entire air division (i.e., about 200-300 aircraft), and" in two minutes "...

With all this, in certain situations, such a tactic as a strike on enemy airfields may be necessary (or

even the only one possible). It is not necessary to completely write it off from the arsenal of possible means of fighting for air superiority. The meaning and purpose of the strike on airfields can be described as briefly and simply as possible: the irretrievable loss of aircraft and pilots in exchange for gaining time. The airfields that have been hit and the enemy air units based on them will quickly restore their combat capability, but there are situations in a war when winning a couple of days decides a lot. That is why **massive raids on enemy airfields were often carried out before the start of major offensive operations**. Even the most short-term decrease in the activity of enemy aviation achieved by this was a significant help to ground forces at the most difficult stage for them to break through the enemy defenses.

There were situations when attacks on airfields became the only possible means of reducing the activity of enemy aircraft. For example, at the beginning of 1941, both British and German bomber aircraft switched to the tactics of night raids on enemy cities and military bases. Despite huge efforts (and considerable success) in the creation and development of radar detection equipment in combat units, night fighters turned out to be powerless at that time in the confrontation with bombers invisible in the darkness of the night. Nothing else but extremely ineffective and leading to huge losses of raids on enemy bomber base airfields was then practically impossible to undertake.

What conclusions can be drawn from these general considerations in relation to the operation of the Soviet Air Force scheduled for June 25, 1941?

**The correspondence between the task and the method of achieving it raises great doubts.** There was no need to use such a risky and costly tactic as a strike on enemy airfields. Not to mention the fact that the Finnish command did not plan to bomb Leningrad (and did not try to do this even when the front line passed at a distance of five minutes of flight to Palace Square), in June of the 41st, the fighter aircraft of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet had everything needed to intercept and destroy two dozen Finnish bombers in the air. This assessment of the situation is in no way changed by the possible participation of one squadron of German bombers from KGr-806 in the allegedly planned "German command in Finland" raid on Leningrad. But perhaps the Soviet command was misinformed? Perhaps, when deciding to strike at Finnish airfields, it proceeded from the erroneous idea that **large German aviation forces were concentrated on the airfields of southern Finland?** So

large that seven hundred fighter pilots available (there were more than a thousand serviceable fighter aircraft in the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet) and the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery grouping of the 2nd Air Defense Corps could not repel a massive German air raid on Leningrad? Maybe. Mistakes in such a complex and risky business as military intelligence are common. But in this case, assuming that many hundreds of German "Messerschmitts" and "Junkers" took refuge on the Finnish airfields, the Soviet command

should have prepared for an attack **on such airfields** in the most serious way. Prepare for a large-scale and heavy battle in the air, and not for the "lazy turns" of three SBs over Finnish airfields. The main components of "serious preparation" for such an operation are well known.

Firstly, thorough reconnaissance, identification of the most significant objects for attack, identification of enemy fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery groups.

Secondly, the allocation of such an outfit of forces that would make it possible to create an overwhelming superiority in the sky over the airfields chosen for the strike. *"It is impossible to be equally strong everywhere,"* paragraph 11 of the Field Manual of the Red Army (PU-39) categorically states. And further: *"Victory is achieved by decisive superiority over the enemy in the main direction."* There was a real opportunity to create such superiority. The Soviet command had about 450 serviceable bombers at its disposal. This means that up to fifty bombers could be assigned to strike at each major enemy airfield.

Thirdly, the concentration of forces in space must be supplemented by concentration in time. Simply put, the main forces and resources should have been invested in a crushing first strike. The first, the most powerful and unexpected for the enemy. *"Suddenness has a stunning effect"* - this, the 16th in a row, paragraph PU-39, every commander of the Red Army should have known for sure. The opportunity for a devastating surprise strike had been created. The government of the USSR did not break off diplomatic relations with Finland, did not present any ultimatums to it, did not announce the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty, and so on. Thus, all the necessary conditions for a surprise (or treacherous, in the language of politics) attack were created.

Fourthly, *"one concentration of superior forces and means is still not enough to win..."*

*It is necessary to achieve interaction between the branches of the armed forces ... The interaction of the branches of the troops is the main condition for success in*

*battle ...* " In this case, the fulfillment of this statutory requirement assumed the organization of the closest interaction between bomber and fighter units and formations. All the necessary conditions for organizing such interaction were present. There were fighters - in numbers twice **the number of bombers**. There were external fuel tanks for I-16 fighters, developed and tested in the spring of 1939, put into mass production in the fall of 1939 and manufactured in the amount of several thousand pieces. With hanging tanks, the flight range of the I-16 type 24 increased to 670 km, which made it possible, operating from the Leningrad airfield hub, to escort bombers to the Helsinki-Lahti-Mikkeli line. There were airfields captured in the spring and summer of 1940 on the Karelian Isthmus, on the southern (Estonian) shore of the Gulf of Finland, on the Hanko Peninsula, taking off from which fighters could escort bombers without any external tanks. Finally, there were one and a half hundred of the latest MiG-3 fighters, which not only surpassed the Finnish fighters in speed (by 150-200 km / h), but also had a flight range of at least 700 km.

Fifth, to strike at airfields, aviation ammunition should have been used, specially designed to hit area targets. Such ammunition was in service with the Soviet Air Force. These are rotary-scattering air bombs (RRAB), capable of scattering 116 small fragmentation bombs AO-2.5 over an area of one hectare, and the so-called "pouring devices", with which the enemy airfield could be poured abundantly with an incendiary mixture of KS or a suspension of white phosphorus. There were also quite simple ABK-500 underwing cassettes that could hold 108 ZAB-1 incendiary bombs or 67 AO-2.5 fragmentation bombs.

Military experts, of course, will be able to add the sixth, seventh, eighth paragraph to this list ... On June 25,

1941, everything was done like that. Only exactly the opposite.



## Chapter

### 3.7 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

*"Air forces of the front and armies with bomber units at 6.20 began to carry out the task of destroying enemy aircraft at its airfields" [278].* This short phrase was located almost at the very end of the morning operational report No. 6 of the headquarters of the Northern Front of June 25, 1941. It remains to be assumed that the command of the Northern Front did not see anything extraordinary in this event. "Got to do it." It is noteworthy that the words "Finnish" or "German" were not used in the summary. Everything is clear to everyone and without additional explanations: "enemy aviation". The very fact of the bombing of the adjacent territory did not cause any comments from the compilers of the document. The most surprising thing is that there is NO mention of the directive of the Stavka of the Civil Code of June 24. Not a single word was said about the need to "prevent a German air raid on Leningrad."

Evening operational report No. 7 of the headquarters of the Northern Front (20.00 June 25, 1941) was more detailed: *"... The ninth. The air forces of the armies and the front carried out tasks to destroy enemy aircraft at its airfields.*

*Bombing was carried out on airfields and airfield facilities. All known airfields in the southern part of Finland up to the Mikkeli-Turku parallel were subjected to bombing (this line is parallel to the Soviet-Finnish border line, but not to geographical parallels. - M.S.). In most cases, successful hits in hangars, airfields were noted, and aircraft were bombed at some airfields. In air battles, 4 enemy aircraft were shot down, in addition, successful hits were noted on the Kainikainen airfield (Kauniainen, a western suburb of Helsinki. - M.S.) (15-17 aircraft) and the Joroinen airfield, where up to 20 aircraft were bombed. Of our aircraft, 11 SBs did not return to their bases, and the landing sites of the 10th SB were not established. Air defense aviation continued to cover Leningrad. There were no encounters with the enemy,*

*there are no losses.*

*Tenth. KBF continues to install barriers. Air Force KBF bombed armadillos and the Turku airfield, one enemy plane was shot down" [279].*

This summary contains a lot of valuable information. Firstly, the message about a powerful strike, about "the first multi-day operation in the history of Soviet aviation" is in ninth place in the general list of events of the day. The command of the Northern Front still does not see anything in this air raid that would be of "decisive importance." We note right away that there were no other noticeable and significant events on the Northern Front that day at all. Paragraph one of operational summary No. 7 contains completely ordinary information: *"First. The troops of the Northern Front carry out defensive work in their areas by covering units, continuing to concentrate mobilized units to the border" [280].* Secondly, the word "German" is not used anywhere.

The object of the strike was still named "enemy aviation" based on airfields in Finland, and the "national identity" of the enemy was not specifically indicated. This

the unknown "enemy" did not even try to strike back (in the sky over Leningrad *"there were no meetings with the enemy, no losses"*). Thirdly, it is

already clear from this report that Soviet aviation suffered significant losses (*"11 SBs did not return to their bases"*), and even at 8 pm the forced landing sites of another 10 bombers were not known. Consequently, venerable Soviet military historians in the ranks of generals either did not read the documents, or frankly lied, arguing that *"our aviation had no losses."* The "creative method" by which Soviet historians counted 30 (or even 41) *"enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground"* also becomes clear. The compilers of Operations Report No. 7 honestly admit that *"bombing was carried out on airfields and airfield facilities"*, i.e. aimlessly, "by area", and only at **"some airfields were bombed aircraft."** Soviet historians summed up the planes **found** (but by no means destroyed!) at the Joroinen airfield (how and with what results the raid on this airfield took place will be noted below) and Kauniainen (there was neither an airfield nor aircraft at all), and got the "desired number":  $17 + 20 = 37$ . Taking into account "4 enemy aircraft shot down in air battles", it turned out 41.

Fourthly, judging by the operational report No. 7, the strike was carried out only on objects in the southern part of Finland (the location of the Joroinen airfield can be called "neutral Finland"). Not a word was said about any strikes **against the location of German troops in northern Finland**. Only on June 27, in the morning operational report No. 10, does the first mention of the actions of Soviet aviation appear in the polar sector of the vast Northern Front:

*"The 1st SAD and the aviation of the Northern Fleet on 25.6 made several sorties, but due to fog they did not reach the targets, for this reason 26.6. no sorties were made... 26.6. 7 Yu-87 planes bombed the Afrikanda airfield (near Murmansk. - M.S.), 17 hundred-kilogram bombs were dropped, there were no injuries, 1 junior specialist was killed"* [281].

A strange "fog", despite which the German dive bombers raided the Afrikanda airfield on June 26, dissipates in the operational report No. 11 (20.00 June 27). It turns out that Soviet aviation was also active on June 26. In operational summary No. 11, finally, there is a mention of the Luostari airfield, i.e. the **only** Finnish airfield where German fighters were based: *"The 1st SAD bombarded the Luostari airfield, the port of Petsamo, Kemijärvi and Rovaniemi from 14.00 on June 26 to 01.00 on June 27, fires were noticed"* [282]. Of course, there were also

operational reports No. 8 (7.00 June 26) and No. 9 (20.00 June 26). On the issue discussed in this chapter, summary No. 8 said the following: *"... Sixth. The 2nd Air Defense Corps had no collisions with the enemy, the air defense aviation patrolled over Leningrad. Seventh. The Air Force of the Northern Front conducted reconnaissance of enemy airfields, and had no collisions with him"* [283]. The

content of operational summary No. 9 is even shorter: *"The Air Force of the combat front and reconnaissance flights were not carried out"* [284].

In short, the "crushing blow", "the first multi-day operation of the Soviet Air Force" **was actually stopped on the second day**. At least, this is the conclusion that can be reached on the basis of documents from the front command. Operational report No. 11 (20.00 June 27) already habitually states: "...

*Seventh. The Air Force of the Northern Front carried out reconnaissance flights of airfields and concentrations of enemy troops with units and pairs of aircraft. Air defense aviation is patrolling over*

*Leningrad ... " [285]. Now let's "twist up the sharpness" and see how the events of June 25, 1941 developed directly in the bomber units of the aviation of the Northern Front (see*

*map No. 12). At 4 am on June 25, combat order No. 3 was drawn up at the headquarters of the 41st BAD (probably a typo came out with the order number, because order No. 2 was signed*

*late in the evening of the same day). "1. According to reliable data, the enemy is preparing a strike on the city of Leningrad. The concentration of ground and air forces continues. According to intelligence data, the enemy air force is based at the airfields of Mikkeli, Heinola, M*

*2. 41st AD with successive strikes of small groups from 3 to 9 aircraft during 25.6. destroys the enemy materiel at the airfields of Mikkeli, Mantyharju, Heinola, Valkeala, making at least 4 hits on each airfield. Bombing height: 2000-3000 m" [286].*

At the same time, at 4 o'clock in the morning, an order of similar content was signed at the headquarters

of the 2nd SAD: *"1. The enemy continues to concentrate ground and air forces, preparing an attack on Leningrad. Aircraft basing at the airfields of Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Borgo (Porvoo).*

*2. The 2nd SAD on the morning of June 25 during the day, with successive strikes by small groups of 3-5 aircraft, destroys enemy aircraft at its airfields. The first blow to readiness. Tension - at least 4 strikes on each enemy airfield.*

An analysis of the orders signed at the same time in Gatchina and Staraya Russa undoubtedly indicates that they were drawn up on the basis of a single order from a higher command. It is extremely important to note the textual similarity of these orders with the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (*"it has been established from reliable sources that German troops are concentrating on the territory of Finland, with the aim of striking at Leningrad ..."*). As for the decision reflected in these orders, with such an organization of the operation, the fulfillment of the task set in the Directive of the Headquarters (*"to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields in the region of the southern coast of Finland"*) could no longer be remembered. The only question now was the price that would be paid for total failure. Let's start with the fact that the deployment of Finnish aviation

( there was no other *"in the region of the southern coast of Finland"* ) was extremely inaccurate. Only in three points (Valkeala, Utti, Mikkeli) of the nine mentioned in the orders (Mikkeli, Heinola, Mantyharju, Valkeala, Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Porvoo) were Finnish fighters actually based: 8 Brewsters at the Valkeala airfield, 6 "gladiators" at the Utti airfield, 7 "Fokkers" at the Mikkeli airfield. **Only 20 aircraft** (for the most part - the most obsolete) at least theoretically could have been bombed by two Soviet air divisions. An airfield hub near the city of Lahti, on which 36 fighters were based, including three squadrons of the best fighter group in the Finnish Air Force.

LLv-24 was not detected at all. Not a single word was said about the distant airfields (Naarajärvi and Joroinen), on which the most modern - by the standards of the Finnish Air Force - fighters were based.

Instead of a sudden crushing first strike, a light "pat" of the Finnish airfields was planned with *"small groups of 3-5 aircraft during the day."* It is clear that the first of the "small groups" could only alert the enemy and notify him of possible subsequent raids. Bombing from a height of 2-3 km and the use of a relatively small number (as a rule, six per aircraft) of high-explosive bombs reduced the probability of destroying enemy aircraft to almost zero. The commanders of the district air force, bomber divisions and regiments did not think about using cluster munitions. Finally, there was no interaction with fighter aircraft even in the plan (all the more it did not turn out to be in reality), and "small groups" of the "high-speed" SB bombers that had long since lost their status flew without any fighter cover to meet with Finnish airfields. The result was quite predictable.

**41st bomber division.** One regiment (the 205th BAP) did not take part in the air strike and did not carry out a single combat sortie on June 25. The remaining three regiments (10th BAP, 201st BAP, 202nd BAP), which included, respectively, 38, 25 and 19 serviceable aircraft, "from 7.45 to 15.00 25.6, groups of 6–9 aircraft operated to *destroy materiel at enemy airfields*. [288] A total of 62 sorties were flown (an average of 0.76 sorties per serviceable aircraft - and this does not include the aircraft of the 205th BAP). Operational reports of the division headquarters (No. 1 of 14.00 and No. 2 of 19.00 on June 25) allow us to reconstruct the following picture of events:

**10th BAP.** Three squadrons of the regiment received the task of attacking the airfields of Mikkeli and Mantyharju. A total of 32 sorties were made. *"No materiel of enemy aircraft was found at the Mikkeli airfield. Bombs fell on the edge of the airfield ..."* The non-existent airfield Mantuharju tried to bomb two squadrons. Judging by the operational report No. 2, one squadron missed so that *"the bombs fell with a flight over the Mantyharju railway station"*, the other squadron *"did not find the equipment of the aircraft at the Mantyharju airfield."* Where and how this squadron got rid of the bombs is not indicated in the report. During the raid, one SB bomber was shot down by enemy fighters (according to Finnish data, "brewsters" from LLv 24), another wrecked SB was able to reach Soviet territory and made an emergency landing.

**201st BAP.** As can be seen from the operational reports of the division headquarters, the regiment commander nevertheless decided to violate the instructions of the higher headquarters to deliver *"consecutive strikes in small groups"*, and two squadrons were sent to the Heinola airfield (which in reality did not exist), in total 18 SB bombers. *"The crews of the 201st BAP did not find the Heinola airfield (naturally, it was not there. - M.S.). The bombing was carried out from 8.40 to 8.43 on the alternate target - the railway station and warehouses. 108 FAB-100s and 17 FAB-50s were dropped... Nine enemy fighters attacked the target, of the Me-119 type (so in the text, Me-119. - M.S.). The latter had identification marks - red*

*stars. The opening of fire was carried out at a distance of 50-70 meters. In the ensuing air battle, 2 Messerschmitts were shot down. 6 aircraft did not return to their base ... "*

6 planes were shot down and crashed to the ground in Finnish territory. Among the dead were the squadron commanders of the 201st BAP, Major (according to other sources, Lieutenant Colonel) Paniushik and Captain Stoylik

[145]. There is information that two tickets to the theater for the evening of June 25 were found in the documents of the deceased commander Paniushik [52]. If this is not a legend, but a real fact, then it quite eloquently testifies to the, to put it mildly, frivolous attitude towards the enemy and the beginning of the war, with which the operation on June 25, 1941 was planned

and carried out. Finnish historian K.F. Geust, in his article on the events of June 25, writes:

*"... The Finnish VNOS service on June 25 was completely disgraced. Although the fighter squadrons were based close to the bombed cities, they received no alarm. In a number of places, the alarm sounded when the bombers were already over the airfield..." [145].*

In the case of the raid of the 201st BAP on the city of Heinola, this impartial criticism is quite fair. Although the main forces of the LLv-24 fighter group were based at the Vesivehmaa airfield, i.e. about 20-25 km from the city of Heinola, not a single fighter was raised in time to intercept, and the alarm at the airfield was sounded only after clouds of smoke were seen rising above the burning city in Vesivehmaa (125 high-explosive bombs did their job). A group of 18 Soviet bombers was attacked by only one **duty pair** of Brewsters from the 2nd Squadron LLv-24, based at the Valkeala airfield (northeast of Kouvola station). According to Finnish data, these two fighters (St. Sergeant E. Kinnunen and Junior Sergeant X. Lampi) shot down 4 bombers. Two more planes, according to the report of H. Lampi, "began to smoke" after the attack [52]. It is possible that the bombers of the 201st BAP on the way back from the target were also attacked by the main forces of LLv-24, the pilots of which announced three enemy aircraft shot down by the end of the day.

The mention of "two enemy fighters shot down in air combat" is not without foundation, since both Brewsters returned to base with bullet holes after the battle with 18 bombers, and E. Kinnunen was slightly wounded in the arm. As for *the "Messerschmitts ME-119 with red stars"*, which in the amount of 9 units "from a distance of 50-70 meters" allegedly attacked a group of bombers of the 201st BAP, this riddle cannot be deciphered ... An aircraft with such a designation did not exist in nature ; The Messerschmitt-109 had such a characteristic silhouette (narrow, long, pointed) that at a distance of 70 m it is absolutely impossible to confuse it with a fat, blunt-nosed Brewster (the slang name for this aircraft was "flying tank"). Finally, the Finnish planes, of course, did not depict a red star, but a swastika, and a very large one at that ... The first flight was the last for the 201st BAP, and more in combat operations 25

June 1941 this regiment did not take part.

**202nd BAP.** We note right away that the combat operations of this regiment were the most successful - not only among the units of the 41st BAD, but also among all the bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Front. The 202nd VAP bombed real home airfields

Finnish aviation (Valkeala and Utti), and given that the Utti airfield was also used by German bombers from KGr-806 during "shuttle raids" on the Kronstadt naval base, we can say that "German airfields in Finland" were also bombed. A total of 12 sorties were carried out. Airfields were bombed from a height of 3 km, while "a flash was visible at the Valkeala airfield, followed by a fire." One bomber from the 202nd BAP was shot down by Finnish fighters. Bomber gunners allegedly shot down one Messerschmitt, this time the 109th, but Finnish sources do not confirm any losses on the ground or in the air over Valkeala, Utti, Kouvola [289].

The general results of the combat operations of the 41st BAD are presented in the following table:

	Correct. aircraft	Departures	Task	Actually Downed	Damaged
10th bap	38	32	air. Mikkeli and Mantuharju	railway station Mikkeli	1 1
201st bap	29	18	air. Heinola	railway station Heinola	6
202nd bap	19	12	air. Utti	air. Utti and Valkeala	1
205th bap	13	0 -	—	—	—
Total 85		62		8	1

**2nd mixed air division.** This division, quantitatively and qualitatively better armed than the 41st BAD, acted on June 25, 1941 extremely passively. The division's capabilities were already limited by the fact that the division's bomber regiments continued to be in the Staraya Russa area, i.e. at a distance of about 350 km from the objects of attack. Taking into account the time required for climbing and cruising speed of the SB (320 km / h), the flight to the target and back took at least 2.5 hours. The use of numerous airfields of the Leningrad junction and the Karelian Isthmus as advanced operational airfields was neither planned nor implemented in practice. However, given the length of daylight hours in June, two departures per serviceable aircraft per day - the first day of a "crushing strike on enemy airfields" - would be quite realistic. In fact, the bombers of the 2nd SAD carried out on June 25 **less than one sortie for three serviceable aircraft.**

In the operational summary of the headquarters of division No. 5 (19.00 on June 25) we read: *"1. With successive strikes of 3-5 aircraft, the 2nd AD carried out sorties to destroy the enemy air force materiel at the airfields of Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Borgo. Produced 41 s / in ... "* [290]. In the archives of the 2nd SAD there are reports from the commanders of each of

the three bomber regiments of the division. This allows us to reconstruct in sufficient detail the events of June 25: **the 2nd BAP.** In the period from 6.45 to 13.45, three flights carried out 9 sorties to the Luumyaki airfield (the Luumyaki railway station

exists, but there was no airfield there), 54 FAB-100 and 12 FAB-50 were dropped. In the reports honestly

it is stated that *"the materiel of the aircraft at the Luumaki airfield was not seen."* The bombs were dropped on the "airfield" of a non-existent airfield. In the area of the Luumyaki railway station, bombers of the 2nd BAP were attacked by five enemy fighters, which shot down one and damaged one SB. Most likely, these were fighters of the same 2nd Squadron 24 based at the Valkeala airfield. Sergeant E. Kinnunen (died on April 21, 1943, having more than 300 sorties and 22 enemy aircraft shot down) [52].

**44th BAP.** In the period from 06.20 to 13.08, 18 sorties were carried out by four groups. During the flight to the target over the Gulf of Finland, two SBs collided in the air - one was broken and crashed into the sea, the second was damaged, but was able to reach the ground. It was probably in this collision that the squadron commander, Major Kosyakin, died, since, judging by the operational reports, the 44th BAP had no losses from enemy fighters and anti-aircraft artillery that day. The main bombing strike was

carried out at the junction railway station of Kouvola. One flight (3 aircraft) was bombed at the Utti airfield, and from a safe (for both attackers and attacked) heights of 6.5 km. It was possible to hit the target from such a height only with the use of TV-guided glide bombs.

**58th BAP.** Four groups of SB bombers carried out 15 sorties. The newest Pe-2 dive bombers of this regiment (as well as the Ar-2 dive bombers from the 2nd BAP) did not participate in the raids. The object of the strike was to be

the non-existent airfields of Borgo (Porvoo) and Kotka (port cities on the coast of the Gulf of Finland). In fact, the results of the raids were as follows:

- 2 planes from a height of 6 km bombed the Porvoo railway station, because. *"airfield not found."* The Porvoo airfield could not have been detected even from a lower altitude, since it simply did not exist. According to Finnish data, 6 bombs fell on the city of Porvoo, where several buildings burned down. The third plane of this link *"broke away from the group and dropped bombs independently on the settlement"* (the name of the point is not indicated);

- five SBs from a height of 3 km bombed the *"settlement of Pyuttie"* (probably Pyukhtya, 15 km west of Kotka), because *"Kotka airfield was closed by heavy clouds."* Not having found the target, the bombers had to attack the alternate target (which was always indicated in the flight task). It was possible to simply drop bombs into the waters of the Gulf of Finland, but for some reason **the settlement** seemed to be the preferred target; - the next group (4 SB) showed

great perseverance and bombed the Kotka airfield from a relatively low altitude (1400 m), but *"since. no enemy planes were found at the airfield"* (in fact, there was no airfield), *the bombing was carried out on the buildings of workshops or hangars. The results of the bombing were not observed and were not photographed, because. after dropping [bombs], they immediately went into the clouds";* - at 13.20, the last raid on that day was made by a link (3 SB), which

from a height of 3 km bombed *"on the buildings of the port, because the Kotka airfield was not found"* [291].

There were no encounters with Finnish fighters and no aircraft losses in the 58th BAP. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that the primitive Finnish VNOS system

simply did not have time to respond to the bombers, appearing for a few minutes from the sea. The overall results of the combat operations

of the 2nd SAD are presented in the following table:

	correct myself.	Departures	Task	Actually	Downed Damaged	
2nd bap	44	9	air. Luumaki railway station	Luumaki 1	1	
44th bap	46	18	air. Utti, Art. Kouvola	air. Utti (3 s / a) and railway camp. Kouvola	1 1 (collision)	
58th bap	52	15	air. Porvoo and Kotka	railway station Porvoo, Port and Kotka	1	0
total	142	41			2	1

**55th mixed air division.** The only bomber regiment of this division (72nd BAP), based at the airfield of Petrozavodsk, was given the task of attacking the airfields of Joensuu and Joroinen. If the large railway station Joensuu as a primary target of strike is constantly found in the pre-war operational plans of the Soviet command, then the Joroinen airfield is not mentioned either in the pre-war plan for covering the Leningrad Military District (although 14 airfields are named "by name" there), nor in the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code from June 24, 1941 (*"eliminate airfields in the region of the southern coast of Finland, meaning the points of Turku, Malmi, Porvoo, Kotka, Kholoda, Tampere, in the areas bordering the Karelian Isthmus and in the region of Kemijärvi, Rovaniemi"*). Most likely, Soviet intelligence did not reveal the fact that an entire fighter group of the Finnish Air Force (LLv-26, 26 Fiat G-50 fighters) was based at the Joroinen airfield. The

Naarajärvi airfield, located about 40 km northwest of the Joroinen airfield, is not mentioned anywhere, on which the LLv-28 group was based in full strength (27 French Moran MS-406 fighters). As a result, the 72nd BAP had to attack the most "hornet's nest" of Finnish aviation without any fighter cover. There was no cover, although the Joroinen airfield and its environs, no doubt, were within the range of the latest MiG-3 fighters from the 7th IAP, 159th IAP and 153rd IAP deployed in the north of the

Karelian Isthmus. Bombers in the target area and I-153 fighters could well cover (there were more than a hundred of them in good condition in the 7th IAP and 153rd IAP), the flight range of which exceeded 600 km. Taking into account the performance characteristics of Finnish fighters, the Chaika could still be considered a full-fledged fighter. But no interaction with the fighter regiments was organized. At 11.45 a large group (14 or 15, according to various sources) of SB bombers from the 72nd BAP at a relatively low altitude (according to Finnish data 1000 m) approached the Joroinen airfield. The tactically competent actions of the regiment's command, it would seem, were supplemented by an element of luck - the bombers approached the airfield at the very moment when the 2nd squadron LLv-26, after a long patrol in the air with empty tanks, landed at the Joroinen airfield. In parentheses, we note that it is precisely this situation (an enemy raid on an airfield during aircraft refueling) that is

often used in domestic



historiography to explain the reasons for the colossal losses of the Soviet Air Force: the Germans allegedly always arrived "at the wrong time ..." The 72nd BAP strike group flew in to bomb the Joroinen airfield, also completely "at the wrong time" (from the point of view of the Finns). Yes, that's just the reaction of the Finnish fighter pilots was timely, clear and bold. The two fiats immediately took to the air and

attacked the vastly outnumbered enemy. As a result (according to Finnish data), three bombers were shot down directly in the airfield area, and the rest. Randomly dropping bombs, they turned back on their course. A few minutes later, the 3rd squadron LLv-26, called by radio, intercepted the bombers of the 72nd BAP near the village of Kerisalo (12 km southeast of Yoroinen). In the ensuing air battle, the strike group of the 72nd BAP was finally defeated. Judging by the report of the commander of the Finnish squadron, Lieutenant U. Nieminen, only four SBs survived by the end of the battle, *"one of which trailed a smoky plume"* [52]. In fact, Finnish fighters shot down not 10 (as they claimed), but 9 bombers of the 72nd BAP. The tenth SB was already shot down over Soviet territory by a Soviet fighter. Among the dead was the squadron commander of the 72nd BAP Captain Polyakov. The Finnish LLv-26 fighter group did not lose **a single aircraft** that day either in the air or on the ground (although the report of the command of the 72nd BAP contained the already traditional message about "three Messerschmitts shot down during an air battle") [52]. Probably the last loss of the day was another bomber of the 72nd BAP, shot down over Joensuu by a Moran patrol from LLv-28 at 1300 Finnish time.

Let us now sum up the first results. The bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front, which were armed with at least 280 serviceable aircraft (and more than 400 combat-ready crews), on June 25, 1941, carried out about **130 sorties** against objects in Finland. Including the airfields where the Finnish fighters were actually based, **no more than 30 aircraft** were bombed (15 at the Utti and Valkeala airfields, 15 at the Joroinen airfield). At the same time, not **a single enemy aircraft was destroyed** or, at least, seriously damaged on the ground or in the air. Not **a single sortie** was made at the base airfields of the Finnish bomber groups (Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi) and the German long-range reconnaissance unit (Luonetjärvi) .

19 bombers (10 from the 72nd BAP, 8 from the 41st BAD, 1 from the 2nd SAD) were shot down by Finnish fighters. One SB from the 72nd BAP was shot down by Soviet fighters, and one SB from the 44th BAP was lost in a collision between two aircraft. Total **irrecoverable losses amounted to 21 aircraft**, which is 16% of the total number of sorties. This is a very high loss rate. For comparison, we note that, for example, during the war in Spain, the average loss of SB bombers was 2% of the number of sorties; Luftwaffe bomber losses during the most critical phase of the "Battle of Britain" (July–September 1940) amounted to about 5% of the total number of daily sorties [48]. On the second day of the "multi-day operation of the Soviet Air Force", the activity of combat

actions of the Air Force of the Northern Front dropped to almost zero.

Operational report No. 3 of the headquarters of the 41st BAD dated 19.00 on June 26 reports the following: *"In the period from 1.30 to 4.00 on 26.6, the 202nd BAP carried out reconnaissance and passing bombing of military targets ... Other parts of the division did not carry out sorties"* [292]. It is worth paying attention to the timing of the "reconnaissance flights."

In June in Leningrad, the nights are, of course, "white", but not so much that to carry out aerial reconnaissance after midnight ...

Operational report No. 4 (1.00 June 27) is even shorter: *"41st AD 26.6 did not carry out military operations"* [293]. On June

27, 1941 at 8.00 at the headquarters of the 41st BAD, Combat Order No. 4 was signed (the first after June 25). It set the following tasks: *"1. The enemy is concentrating troops near the border of the Northern Front ... 2. During the day 27.6, the 41st BAD conducts reconnaissance and photography, simultaneously bombing, of the following areas (the following is a list of 19 Finnish toponyms. - M.S.) in order to establish available forces and group enemy troops, **establishing a system of defensive zone** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) of the enemy.*

*3. Do not carry out tasks without escort of fighters ... "* [294]. So, already on the morning of June 27, the "airfield" operation for the 41st BAD ended. The tasks set by Order No. 4 are directly related to the upcoming **combat operations of the ground forces**. It is worth recalling that the 41st BAD was operationally subordinate to the command of the 23rd Army deployed in the north of the Karelian Isthmus. It is noteworthy that on the morning of June 27, 1941, the purpose of reconnaissance was to identify the "system of the enemy's defensive zone." It is impossible to explain the setting of such tasks by anything other than preparation for an offensive (those who wish can call it a "counterattack").

A new attempt to resume sorties, this time with fighter cover, led to new losses on June 27. True, the enemy took a minimal part in this. In the operational report No. 5 of the headquarters of the 41st BAD (dated 15.00 on June 27) we read: *"The 41st AD during the day produced 11 s / in order to reconnaissance of the enemy grouping ... The 10th BAP and the 205th BAP did not conduct combat operations ... In the Kexholm region (that is, over Soviet territory. - M.S.), one SB from the 201st BAP was shot down either by our anti-aircraft artillery or by escort fighters ... In the 202nd BAP, the SB link was attacked by a MiG. One SB was burned and broken, another one was shot down (the crew jumped out on parachutes), the third SB was damaged and landed on an emergency)"* [295]. Operational

reports No. 6 and No. 7 (dated 20.00 June 27 and 15.00 June 28) again succinctly state: *"The 41st AD did not carry out military operations ..."* [296]. A similar

picture emerges from Operational reports No. 6, 7, 8, 9 of the headquarters of the 2nd SAD. There were no sorties at all on July 26, on June 27 one link (3 aircraft) from the 44th BAP flew for aerial reconnaissance in the area of Dvinsk (Daugavpils). This day, June 27, 1941, turned out to be a day of increased activity of Soviet fighters. In operational summary No. 9 we read: *"MiGs of the 159th IAP were attacked, one was shot down"* [297]. Who exactly was "hit" (bomber or attacking fighter); what happened to the aircraft and crew; finally, how does a fighter from the 159th IAP based on the Karelian Isthmus

turned out to be in the way of bombers flying from the Staraya Russa region to Daugavpils, it will not be possible to establish on the basis of this report ...

The Air Force acted much more actively, efficiently and assertively  
Red Banner Baltic Fleet.

Only these actions, even formally, had nothing to do with the "destruction of German aircraft at Finnish airfields". The Air Force of the Baltic Fleet unleashed quite powerful and organized strikes on targets that had been studied in detail for a long time (since the time of the "winter war"): enemy naval bases and ships, the ports of Turku, Salo, Helsinki, Kotka. Special "attention" from the command

of the KBF Air Force. apparently, the city and port of Turku was used, which was bombed by air squadrons of all three bomber regiments of the fleet aviation. Starting from 7 am on June 25, large groups of Soviet bombers (a total of 54 SB and 30 DB-3) attacked the port facilities of Turku, the ships in the harbor (of course, the two Finnish coastal defense battleships Vainemäinen were still the highest priority target "And" Ilmarinen ", which once again survived the air raid). Soviet bombers during the raid on Turku covered two squadrons of fighters from the 13th IAP of the KBF Air Force. based at the Hanko airfield (i.e., about 80 km from Turku). The Turku airfield located near the port was also bombed. As noted above, an extremely small LLv-6 air group was based at the Turku airfield, which was armed with 3 captured SBs and 5 captured I-153 fighters. During the raid,

one SB was damaged (according to other sources, destroyed), and this is **the only authentically known loss of Finnish aviation** from a "crushing blow to airfields" on June 25, 1941. In addition, on the airfield of the airfield "one building was destroyed and 5 horses" [145].

Bombers of the KBF Air Force in the Turku region did not suffer losses that day.

Less successful for the attackers was the raid on the Rihimäki railway station, which was carried out by a group of DB-3 long-range bombers on the morning of June 25. At about 0800, seven battered Fokkers from the LLv-32 air group based at the Hyvinkä airfield intercepted bombers near the village of Kerava (20 km northeast of Helsinki, i.e. almost immediately after they crossed the coastline of the Gulf of Finland ). In the memoirs of an LLv-32 veteran, the events of that morning are described as follows: *"The Russians immediately turned around and left in the opposite direction, but Lieutenant V. Evinen opened fire and shot down two enemy aircraft. One fell in the Malmi area, and the other in the waters of the Gulf of Finland. The alarm was sounded several more times that day at the Hyvinkä airfield, but thick clouds of dust from taking off fighters forced the enemy bombers to turn back before the interceptors could take to the skies .*

The report of two downed DB-3s may be true, since only the 1st MTAP (one of the two bomber regiments of the KBF Air Force, which were armed with long-range bombers of this type) irretrievably lost 3 aircraft in air battles of the first days of the war [271]. On the same day, June 25, fleet aviation attacked the ports of Kotka and Salo, the suburbs of Helsinki (Tikkurila was bombed by 18 aircraft, Puistola - 8) [145]. Central districts of the capital of Finland

were not bombed (perhaps for foreign policy reasons, since the victims of the raids in this case could be the diplomatic missions of Stalin's future main allies).

Former navigator of the 1st MTAP, Lieutenant General P.I. Khokhlov, in his remarkably "inaccurate" memoirs, writes: *"Our regiment during this operation destroyed enemy aircraft at the airfields of Lahti and Lappeenranta. There, according to the observations of the crews, explosions and fires occurred, 17 German aircraft were destroyed"* [134]. Even if the raids on Larti and Lappeenranta are not the fruit of the fiction of the memoirist or his "litconsultants", it was very difficult to find "17 aircraft" there, and even identify them as "German". The Hollola and Vesivekhmva airfields (the main LLv-24 base airfield) located near the city of Lahti were not subjected to Soviet air raids on June 25; moreover, taking into account that three squadrons of the best fighter group of the Finnish Air Force were based there, it can be reasonably assumed that the raid on Vesivehmva would have led the 1st MTAP to the same results as the raid of the 72nd BAP on the Joroinen airfield. As for the large railway station and the city of Lappeenranta, there was not a single Finnish (not to mention German) aviation unit at the airfield located near the city ... In the early morning of June 26, the combat operations of the KBF Air Force were resumed with the same

scope and perseverance.

At dawn (between 3 and 4 am) 9 SB bombers (18 according to other sources) reappeared in the sky over the city of Turku. A pair of I-153 "Seagulls" from the LLv-6 went up to intercept, and in the area of the village of Korppoo (Åland Islands), ensign T. Hyamelya shot down one bomber, which, according to the report of ground observers, fell into the sea [52].

Three hours later, at 6.15 minutes on June 26, a large group of bombers (SB according to Finnish data) again bombed the airfield, the port and the city of Turku. *"The runway and several hangars were damaged, three aircraft were damaged, one mechanic was killed and two people were injured. In the city, the damage was more significant, with 13 civilians killed and 29 injured. The entire seaside region of Turku was on fire, 18 stone and 101 wooden buildings were destroyed..."* [145]. Among the destroyed buildings was the medieval fortress of Turku. The next wave of bombers hit Turku from 1020 to 1105. On the same day, June 26, attacks were made on the suburbs of Helsinki, on the ports of Kotka. Porvoo. Salo, Malmi airfields (near Helsinki) and Utti. Other irretrievable losses, except for a bomber shot down over Korppoo early

in the morning. The Air Force of the Baltic Fleet did not suffer on June 26, 1941. The Turku airfield was destroyed so badly that the five I-153s from

LLv-6 that survived the bombing were relocated to the Nummela airfield (40 km west of Helsinki) [52]. Thus, **the redeployment of enemy aircraft** under the influence of Soviet Air Force strikes **actually took place**. Only, it was not "German aircraft to distant rear airfields" that were relocated, but 5 (five) captured Soviet I-153s from Turku to Helsinki, i.e. even closer to the Soviet coast of the Gulf of Finland.

Summing up the actions of the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, it should be noted that they suffered significantly less - compared to the Air Force of the Northern Front - losses (two

bomber DB-2 and one SB) and achieved noticeable (and in Turku - even very noticeable) results. The Baltic Fleet Air Force was able to destroy one **enemy aircraft** (captured SB) and **disable the Turku airfield for some time**.

On the other hand, all attempts to disable the warships of the Finnish Navy turned out to be unsuccessful again. The capabilities of the long-range bombers DB-3, which were in service with the KBF Air Force, were not used at all. With rare exceptions, bombing attacks were carried out on targets located directly on the coast of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. **Not a single raid deep into the country** was made. Neither the largest industrial center of Finland, the city of Tampere (specifically indicated in the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24), nor the base airfields of the Finnish bomber aviation (Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi), nor the most important airfields of the Finnish fighters (Pori, Hyvinkä, Vesivehmaa, Joroinen, Nadrajärvi). In fact, the long-range bombers of the KBF Air Force, based at the airfields of Kotly and Bezzabotnoye (i.e., directly off the coast of the Gulf of Finland), operated at a much smaller radius than the bomber regiments of the 41st BAD, equipped with SB light bombers. Statistics is the science of large numbers, and the results of two days of hostilities hardly allow for serious

generalizations. Therefore, let's put it this way: **it is possible** that it was precisely such tactics of the KBF Air Force (the choice of objects located directly on the coast, and the actual ignoring of the task set by the directive of the Civil Code of June 24), combined with the weakness of the Finnish VNOS system, led to minimal losses of naval aviation bombers. In any case, there is no information that the KBF Air Force bombers and the fighters accompanying them repulsed the attack and shot down at least one Finnish fighter in the air.

At the end of the chronicle of events on June 25-26, it remains to briefly mention the combat operations of Soviet aviation in the polar north of

Finland. If the air strike on June 25, 1941 were in fact a reaction to the actions of German troops in Finland (even if the reaction was hasty and poorly organized), then the main forces of Soviet aviation would have to be directed to objects in the Arctic, where four German divisions finished final preparations for the advance on Murmansk and Kandalaksha. In fact, **no regrouping of the forces of the Air Force of the Northern Front and / or the Air Force of the internal military districts in the Murmansk direction was carried out**, and Soviet aviation operated in the same grouping in which it was found on the evening of June 24 by the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code.

As noted in previous chapters, the Air Force of the Northern Fleet began active hostilities from the very first days of the war, and the first raid on the Hebukten airfield (in the territory of Norway occupied by the Germans) was made on June 23rd. On June 25, the zone of operations of the aviation of the Northern Fleet and the 14th Army of the Northern Front was only expanded due to the inclusion of airfields on the territory of Finland among the objects of strikes. The weather conditions, indeed, hindered the actions of aviation (almost the entire last week of June in the Murmansk-Petsamo region there were low clouds and rains), but combat

the actions of the Soviet Air Force were still not as miserable as they are described in the first operational reports of the headquarters of the Northern Front.

At 1.25 on June 25, the Military Council of the Northern Fleet received a directive from the People's Commissar of the USSR Navy on the start of hostilities against Finland, which literally repeated the text of the directive of the Civil Code of June 24.

Just as in the instructions of the Air Force command of the Northern Front, *"the raids were ordered to be carried out within a day in small groups of three to nine aircraft, making at least four strikes on each airfield. The bombing height was set at 2500-3000 m, the results of the bombing were to be photographed. The first blow was to be delivered at 4.30, in the presence of clouds that prevented bombardment from a given height, to bombard from under the clouds"* [224]. In addition to these general requirements, the People's Commissar of the Navy ordered *"among active actions against Finland to provide for a strike on Petsamo and the transports located in it, by aviation, as well as artillery, coastal and naval"* [224]. Until **June 24, the reconnaissance reports of the 1st SAD (headquarters in Murmansk) name only** airfields in Norway (Vadse, Hebukten, Banak, Tromsø, Narvik, Bole, Trondheim) as German aviation bases.

Only in intelligence report No. 5 (dated 12.00 on June 24) does the message appear, however, not supported by anything and absolutely non-specific, the message: *"The presence of German aircraft and air groups on the territory of Finland has been established"* [300]. Nevertheless, the fact that German aircraft were relocated (in fact, it was one squadron of fighters from JG-77) to the Luostari border airfield did not go unnoticed. It was the Luostari airfield that became (more precisely, should have become) the first object of a bombing attack in turn.

In the early morning (the words "at dawn" are inappropriate in this case, since at the end of June the sun in the Arctic does not go beyond the horizon) of June, at 4.52 25, eight SB from the 72nd SAP of the Northern Fleet Air Force flew out to bombard Luostari, but low cloud cover and fog forced the command to return the entire group to the airfield. But that was only the beginning of the day. At 13.50, a pair of SB scouts from the 72nd SAP approached the airfield at a low altitude of 500 meters and, despite the fire of anti-aircraft guns, it passed over the airfield, while establishing the presence of Messerschmitts at the airfield.

After that, the next five SBs from the 72nd SAP from a height of 500 meters bombed the airfield of the Luostari airfield without loss (the enemy, however, also did not lose a single aircraft during this raid). The fourth attempt to bomb the Luostari airfield was

unsuccessful. The link of bombers of the 72nd SAP when approaching the target (we repeat once again that the Luostari airfield was only a few kilometers from the border) was fired upon by Soviet anti-aircraft gunners. Dodging anti-aircraft fire, the planes went into the clouds, where they lost their orientation, while one bomber could not find its airfield and made an emergency landing in the deserted tundra (where the plane lay until the end of the year). Luostari and several aircraft from the 137th BAP (1st SAD) bombed. Finally, at 18.00 Luostari airfield was stormed by four I-16 fighters from the 145th IAP of the same division [299]. There were no losses from both ours and the German side in these raids.

Intelligence report No. 8 of the headquarters of the 1st SAD (dated 16.30 on June 25) recorded the following result: *"During 25.06, part of the 1st SAD, reconnaissance and combat operations established: enemy aircraft at the Luostari airfield, the number and type were not established. Planes are camouflaged with trees"* [301]. More specific, but very inaccurate, were the military intelligence data of the 14th Army, according to which *"there were 8-10 camouflaged bombers and 6-8 fighters at the Luostari airfield."* Only on June 27 did the air reconnaissance data coincide with the real state of affairs: *"Aerial reconnaissance of the Northern Fleet detected up to 10 aircraft at the Luostari airfield"* [224]. The

Luostari airfield was far from being the only object of air attacks on 25 June. Aviation of the Northern Fleet tried to bomb the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, but, having fallen into heavy fog, returned to the base. The Finnish port of Liinakhamari in the Petsamo region was bombed. On the evening of June 25, the Fleet Air Force bombed the Norwegian airfield Banak, where German bombers were based. The result of the raid is not exactly known, but two bombers of the Air Force of the Northern Fleet did not return assignments. The report about four Me-110s shot down that day is not confirmed by enemy documents. On June 26, 1941, the Air

Force of the Northern Fleet carried out single and group raids on Petsamo and Kirkenes. Luostari and Vadso. Judging by the documents of the fleet headquarters, *"fires broke out at the enemy's airfields ... the fire of our coastal battery from the Sredny Peninsula and the bombing of our aircraft damaged the radio station in Petsamo, a fire was observed ..."* [224]. Bombers from the 137th BAP (according to Finnish data, 9 aircraft) made a long-range raid deep into Finland and bombed the city and the airfield of Rovaniemi (more than 400 km in a straight line from Murmansk). The presence of up to 12 enemy aircraft at the Rovaniemi airfield was recorded [302]. On the same day, six SBs (probably also from the 137th BAP) bombed Kemijärvi. In both cases, losses and destruction were minimal [145]. The Luftwaffe long-range reconnaissance unit based in Rovaniemi, as well as the fighter squadron at the Luostari airfield, **did not have any losses in aircraft on June 25-26**

had.

## Chapter 3.8

### "DO NOT OPEN THE FIRE FIRST..."

In the early morning (one might say, at night) on June 27, 1941, urgent messages flew from headquarters to headquarters (as it should be in such cases - marked "top secret"): "Ryti declared Finland at war with the USSR." This uniformity of strange wordings (not "Finland announced", namely "Ryti announced") suggests that one command for all came "from the very top", and then was already duplicated in lower instances. The headquarters of the Northern Fleet sent out a warning about the beginning of the war at 2.15 on

June 27. At

this *"all services were asked to increase their vigilance"* [224].

The chief of staff of the 1st MK, Colonel Limarenko, at 5.00 on June 27, sent the following message to all units and formations of the corps (a total of 18 copies were made): "*Ryti declared Finland at war with the Soviet Union. Take measures to increase combat readiness*" [303]. The order given in the 10th MK was more detailed: "Ryti

*declared Finland at war with the USSR. The corps commander, in pursuance of the order of the army commander, ordered: To bring every single unit to full combat readiness for action.*

*When the enemy*

*opens fire, respond with all the power of our fire. Reflect enemy tanks with the entire fire system. Our units are the first to fire*

*Don't open.*

*The combat readiness of the units for action is checked personally by the commanders and this reflect in detail in the operational summary at 24.00 on June 27 and in a special combat report.*

*Beginning Headquarters 10 MK Colonel Zaev*

*" [304]. The archived copy of this order has no number, no date, no time. The previous document in the archives is dated 02027 June 27, so the order was signed between dawn and midnight on 27 June. Perhaps (judging by some moments of the content), the order was drawn up after the headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps received the following **directive from the Military Council of the Northern Front**: "To the commanders of the 7th and 23rd armies, the*

*commanders of the 19th SC, 50th SC, 70th SC, 1st MK, 10th MK*

*1. The troops of the Northern Front, being in constant readiness to repel the enemy offensive, continue to strengthen and develop the defense lines, paying main attention to the creation of anti-tank obstacles, the preparation of obstacles and mining at the entire depth according to the plan. 2. Prior to the opening of hostilities, enemy ground units*

*should not open fire. Only with the opening of artillery fire by him first or during his sudden tank attack, to fall with all the might of our artillery on tanks, on reconnoitered firing positions of enemy artillery and areas of concentration of his tanks and infantry, and mortar fire on the initial position of the infantry. Com. troops of the Northern Front Popov Member of the Military Council Klementiev*



*Member of the Military Council*

*Shtykov Member of the Military Council*

*Kuznetsov*" [305]. The form in this case is as remarkable as the content. The directive of the Military Council is issued without a number and without a date. True, on the typewritten sheet itself with the text of the directive there is a corner stamp: "Operational Department of the Headquarters of the LVO. Ref. No. 3009, 27.6.41" Why the "headquarters of the LVO", if already starting from the evening of June 22 all documents go on behalf of the commander and headquarters of the **Northern Front**, and this Directive was signed by the front commander, and not the district? Further, the heading of the directive does not contain the 14th Army (one of the three armies of the Northern Front), but there is the 70th SC (70th Rifle Corps), which does not exist in reality. Most likely, the compilers had in mind the "70th SD", i.e. The 70th rifle division, which actually existed, was not part of the rifle corps and was directly subordinate to the front command. Finally, the document does not have the signature of the chief of staff of the district - and this is already very strange. In accordance with the Regulations on the Military Council of the District, approved on May 16-17, 1937, the Armed Forces included three people: the commander, the chief of staff and the so-called PMC (member of the Military Council, i.e. party representative, commissar) [146] . All known combat orders, operational reports and directives of the first days of the war were signed by the Chief of Staff of the Northern Front, Major General Nikishev or (very rarely) his deputy, Chief of the Operations Department of the Staff, Major General Tikhomirov. Here are their signatures. No.

It remains to be assumed that the directive was prepared in haste and nervous fuss. The most striking confirmation of the "nervous fuss" at the front headquarters is that the commander decided to back up his decision with the signatures of THREE party bosses at once: corps commissar N.N. Klementyev, First Secretary of the Leningrad City Committee, Divisional Commissar A.A. Kuznetsov and Second Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee, Brigadier Commissar T.F. Shtykov.

Now let's move on from the form to the content. What event so excited the military and party leaders of the highest ranks?

Not only in Moscow, but also in Helsinki, a large and important event was scheduled for June 25, 1941. On June 25, a closed meeting was to be held in the Finnish parliament to discuss the foreign policy situation in which Finland found itself in connection with the outbreak of the Soviet-German war. As presented by K.G. Mannerheim, the following was planned: *"The government intended to make a statement in parliament on June 25 that it **had decided to support the neutrality** of Finland (emphasis mine. - M.S.). The Prime Minister's report was ready on June 24 in the evening, but the events of the next day forced the government to reconsider the issue ... "* [22].

On this issue, Marshal Mannerheim, to put it mildly, is "cunning" (which, however, is quite understandable, given that the memoirs were written in those months of the late 40s, when the state independence of Finland hung by a thin thread). On the evening of June 24, 1941, three divisions of the Wehrmacht and the SS motorized brigade "Nord" were already in the far north of Finland and were preparing to invade the territory of the USSR. This can by no means be called a policy of "supporting the neutrality of Finland." Most likely, Prime Minister Y. Rangel was preparing for a very difficult conversation with

parliamentarians, and this conversation could well end with a change in the head of government.

Of the 200 seats in the Finnish parliament, 85 belonged to the Social Democrats and only 8 seats (4% of all votes) were occupied by deputies from the far-right, anti-Soviet and anti-communist Patriotic People's Movement (IKL) party. With such a balance of political forces, steps taken in secret from Parliament to draw Finland into the war on the side of fascist Germany could cause a very sharp reaction. Moreover, on June 20, President Risto Ryti met with members of the Social Democratic faction of parliament and assured them that Finnish troops would not be used to attack the Soviet Union. And on the eve of this meeting, on June 19, the leader of the Social Democrats, one of the most influential politicians in the country, V. Tanner (foreign minister during the "winter war"), at a meeting of leaders of trade unions and workers' organizations, said that "our troops will be used only for *defense country, but not for offensive actions*.

At dawn on June 25, the Soviet leadership presented the Finnish supporters of the "revenge war" with a gift that they did not even dare to dream of (perhaps the German allies organized this "gift" for them, but more on that later). To the accompaniment of bombs exploding in the suburbs of Helsinki, Prime Minister Rangel said from the rostrum of Parliament: *"The air raids against our country, the bombing of undefended cities, the killing of civilians - all this showed more clearly than any diplomatic assessments what is the attitude of the Soviet Union towards Finland. This is war. The Soviet Union repeated the attack with which it tried to break the resistance of the Finnish people in the 'winter war' of 1939-1940. As then, we will stand up for our country."*

On the evening of June 25, the parliament decided to consider Finland as being at war against the USSR. The next day, June 26, 1941, President R. Ryti delivered a radio address to the nation: *the duty to defend ourselves, and we will do so resolutely and unanimously with all the moral and military means at our disposal. Our chances of getting out successfully from this second defensive war this time are completely different than they were last time when we were under the onslaught of the eastern giant. The armed forces of great Germany, under the leadership of the brilliant leader Chancellor Hitler, are successfully fighting together with us against the armed forces of the USSR known to us ... The Soviet Union will now not be able to put up against our armed forces that crushing superior force that made our defensive struggle hopeless last time. Now the Soviet Union found itself in an equal struggle in terms of numbers, and the success of our*

*defensive struggle is provided" [17].*

A radio message has (compared to a newspaper article) the advantage that it can be heard over the radio. Accordingly, in order to find out the content of the statement of the President of Finland, it was not necessary to perform another "feat of a scout", sending him in full uniform and with a parachute behind his back to seize a newsstand in Helsinki. Moreover, according to the memoirs of the Soviet intelligence resident in Helsinki E.T. Sinitsyn, he recruited some "prominent political and

public figure of Finland", known to this day only by the undercover nickname Monk. In the presence of such "undercover exits", the decision adopted by the Finnish parliament **on the evening of June 25** in Miskva and Leningrad should have been known even before Ryti's radio address, i.e. on the night of June 25-26...

However, the most important thing is not in hours and minutes, but in a completely different thing - what was so amazing seen (heard) by Soviet generals in Leningrad and marshals in Moscow? **What other reaction to the massive bombing of Finland did they expect?** And weren't the Finnish troops called "enemy troops" in all the documents of the units and formations of the Northern Front already starting from June 22-23?

Now let's move on from rhetorical questions to substantive questions.

The directive of the Military Council of the Northern Front unequivocally requires giving the initiative to the enemy (*"until the opening of hostilities by the ground units of the enemy, do not open fire. Only with the opening of artillery fire by him first or during his sudden tank attack ..."*). Let's leave aside for now the repeated references to "enemy tanks" and the need to pay "main attention to the creation of anti-tank obstacles", which are found in the directive of the Military Council and the order of the commander of the 10th mechanized corps (and this is in the complete absence of German or Finnish tank units on the front 23th and 7th armies). Another thing is more important - why is it ordered *"not to open fire first"*? Why and why is it necessary to give the enemy the initiative and all the obvious tactical advantages of the first strike?

The only possible explanation (and justification) for such a strange operational art can only be the sudden emergence of **political interests that prevailed over military expediency**. So to speak, the "second coming" of the legendary idea "do not succumb to provocations." However, it is precisely this logic in this case that is simply striking in its absurdity. "Ryti declared war." Finland is already at war with the USSR. The war has already been officially declared, and there can be no "provocations" after that in principle. Now all that remains is to convey the corresponding statement of the Soviet government to the Finnish ambassador in Moscow and after that begin to implement the pre-war plans for "active defense". Without any restrictions. In June 1941, everything was done, exactly the opposite. On June 25, **without**

**a declaration of war, without the recall of the ambassador from Helsinki, without official notice of the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940**, a massive bombing strike is carried out on the territory of Finland. Even cities (Mikkeli and Rovaniemi) located at a distance of 100–150 km from the border are becoming objects of attack. Two days later, the troops located directly at the border were given the task of waiting for the enemy to go on the offensive, but not to open fire themselves first. That is, when it was impossible - then you can. And when is it already possible - not?

Order No. 1 of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Army, Marshal Mannerheim, signed on the same days, sounded much more specific: *"Soldiers of*

*Finland! Our glorious Winter Warrior ended in a heavy peace. Despite the conclusion of peace, our country has appeared to the enemy as objects of shameless threats and constant blackmail, which, together with criminal incitement aimed at undermining our unity, shows that the enemy from the very beginning did not*

*considering the world permanent. The concluded peace was only a truce, which is now are over.*

*You know the enemy. You know the constancy of his goals, aimed at the destruction of our dwellings, our faith and our Fatherland and the enslavement of our people. The same enemy and the same threat are now at our borders. For no reason, he brazenly attacked our peaceful people and bombed various parts of the country. The future of the Fatherland requires new exploits from you.*

*I call you to a holy war against the enemy of our nation. Fallen war heroes rise from their graves and stand by our side today as we, together with the mighty military forces of Germany, like brothers in arms, embark with determination on a crusade against the enemy to secure a secure future for Finland.*

*Companions! Follow me one last time - now that again the people of Karelia are rising and a new dawn is dawning for Finland" [37].*

## Chapter 3.9

### WHAT WAS IT?

We can now return to the questions that were formulated in chapter 3.3. We list them in the order of increasing complexity indicated there.

- What forces (units, formations, aircraft) of the German and Finnish bomber aircraft based on airfields in Finland?

- What kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group carry out during June 22–24, 1941? What actions were planned by the enemy command for the coming days and weeks?

- What was the real scale of the threat posed by the enemy aviation grouping in Finland, in comparison with both other threats hanging over Leningrad, and with the air defense capabilities of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet? - What was the immediate result

- of the Soviet air strike on Finland  
(losses of the parties, change of plans of the parties)?

- What did the Soviet command, Soviet intelligence know about the deployment of enemy air units in Finland, about his actions and

- plans? - What was the real reason for the decision on June 24, 1941 to launch an air strike on Finland, what were the real goals and objectives of this operation? - How did the June 25 air

- strike affect the general course of the Soviet Union's war against Germany and its allies? We will try to find

- the answer to the last of these questions in the next part of this book. As for the group of the first four questions, the real facts and quite reliable documents identified and described in the previous chapters make it possible to give exhaustive answers to them.

On the territory of Finland (at the airfields of Rovaniemi and Luonetjärvi), two units (6 aircraft in total) of long-range aviation reconnaissance were based, and one squadron (a total of 10 serviceable Messerschmitts) of Luftwaffe fighters was based at the Luostari polar airfield. In addition, one squadron of German bombers (no more than 12 aircraft) from the KGr-806 air group based in East Prussia landed several times for refueling at the Finnish airfields Utti and Malmi (southern Finland). Active combat operations of Soviet and German aviation began from the very first days of

the war (i.e. already June 22–23), but not over Leningrad, but in the Arctic, in the sky over Kirkenes, Petsamo, Murmansk, and the Rybachy Peninsula. Both sides of the outbreak of the war fought, regardless of the state borders of Finland. Soviet bombers attacked military targets in German-occupied Norway, German planes bombed the main base of the Northern Fleet in the Murmansk region, attacked Soviet ships in the Barents Sea, conducted aerial reconnaissance in the Murmansk and Kandalaksha regions. All sorties of Luftwaffe aircraft in the Arctic were made **exclusively from airfields in Norway** (Hebukten and Banak).

German fighters flew to the Finnish Luostari airfield only on June 24–25, and until the start of the offensive of the Wehrmacht ground forces on Murmansk, they did not participate in hostilities (not counting the repulse of Soviet Air Force attacks on the Luostari airfield). Bombers (long-range Ju-88s and diving Ju-87s) continued to be based on the large Norwegian airfields of Hebukten and Banak in the first weeks of the German offensive, and only much later, after the advance of the ground forces to the east, they began to use the airfields in Luostari, Alakurtti, Kemijärvi. "German bombers

based in Finland" did not carry out any raids on Leningrad and the cities of Karelia. Not on the first or any of the subsequent days of the war. **For the simplest reason, they were never there.** In the early days of the war, the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe supported the combat operations of ground forces in the Baltic states, based on the airfields of East Prussia. And in the future, no relocation of German air units to the territory of southern and / or central Finland was carried out, and there was not the slightest operational sense in it - it was easier, closer and safer to bomb Leningrad from airfields on the territory of the occupied Pskov and Novgorod regions (damaged during bombers had to fly no more than 100 km over the water surface of the Gulf of Finland). The issue of belonging (to the Soviet or German aviation) of several aircraft that dropped bombs on the Hanko Peninsula

on June 22 needs further clarification. In any case, the Soviet military base, located on the actually occupied territory of Finland, cannot in any way be attributed to the list of "Leningrad and the cities of Karelia".

In the first two days of the war, German bombers twice mined the bay of the Kronstadt naval base, while aircraft (no more than 14 Junkers-88s from KGr-806 and Kb.Fl.Gr-506) landed for refueling at the Finnish airfields of Utti and Malmi. In the general scale of minelayings carried out by the Germans in the waters of the Gulf of Finland (more than 2.5 thousand mines of all types), these operations accounted for an insignificantly small proportion. Air mining was stopped on the second day of the war. Most likely because the risk of losing aircraft operating without any fighter cover in the zone of the most powerful air defense of Leningrad and Kronstadt was assessed by the German command as excessive, and most importantly - after the successful completion of mining exits from the Gulf of Finland for the Germans - no longer justified. The Soviet fighter aviation could and should have prevented the aerial mining of the Kronstadt Bay. After this did not happen, any actions - including the bombing of the Utti airfield - became only an example of what in Russian is called "waving your fists after a fight." The extremely small bomber aviation of Finland (23 Blenheim and SB light

twin-engine bombers) did not make any raids on Leningrad - not only in June 41, but even when the Finnish army reached the border of 1939 and the front line ran 30 km from the center of Leningrad. Throughout the war, Mannerheim's order was in effect in Finnish aviation, categorically forbidding any flights of Finnish aircraft over Leningrad. As for the reconnaissance flights that the Finnish aviation really conducted in

border zone even before the official declaration of war, then in this case the Finnish side only "mirrored" the actions of the Soviet aviation, which conducted aerial reconnaissance of the territory of Finland, absolutely disregarding the borders, throughout the entire period of the "truce" (from March 1940 to June 1941 years).

The fighter aviation grouping of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, concentrated in the region of Leningrad and the Karelian Isthmus, was one of the most powerful in all the Armed Forces of the USSR. Its numbers **were dozens of times greater than** the number of German aircraft (bombers or reconnaissance aircraft) that at least occasionally appeared on the airfields of southern and central Finland. In addition, the air defense system of Leningrad had the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery grouping, which had no equal in the world (the air defense of London and Berlin did not have such a number of anti-aircraft guns). The air defense system of Leningrad was built with the expectation of repulsing massive air raids by the largest European powers (Germany, England and their possible allies). Accordingly, the suggestion that two dozen Finnish or German bombers posed a "mortal threat to Leningrad" is completely absurd.

Just as absurd are the arguments that only such extraordinary measures as a sudden and treacherous attack on Finnish airfields could *"save Leningrad from the fate of cities subjected to fierce bombardment."* Unfortunately, Leningrad was subjected to a "violent bombardment." And not just once. If it is permissible to talk about history in the subjunctive mood, then Leningrad could have been saved from this bitter fate by successfully repulsing the offensive of the Wehrmacht in the Baltic states, creating a stable defense at the turn of the Western Dvina, and effective operations of fighter aircraft. All this had nothing to do with Finland.

As for the real tasks of the air strike that began on the morning of June 25, the assumption that it was directed against the German air and ground forces in Finland and had as its goal "the disruption of the impending raid on Leningrad" *can* arise only on the basis of studying the orders and directives of the Soviet command. Yes, you can read something like that in the orders. The actual actions of the Soviet Air Force are very difficult to interpret in this way:

1. The only Luftwaffe unit based in the vast expanses of southern and central Finland was a reconnaissance link (two Dornier Do-215 and one Heinkel He-111) at the Luonetjärvi airfield. It

is absurd to discuss the "threat" that these three aircraft posed for Leningrad, and yet - if the goal of the operation was "the destruction of German aviation based on Finnish airfields", then the Luonetjärvi airfield should have become the object of attack No. 1. But not a single Soviet aircraft appeared in the sky over Luonetjärvi, and not a single bomb fell on the airfield of this airfield.

2. Speaking abstractly, a raid on Leningrad could have been carried out by Finnish bomber aircraft - but not **a single raid on its two main airfields (Sinkakangas and Luonetjärvi) was carried out.**

3. The Utti airfield, which was used to refuel German bombers on June 22–23, was included in the general list of targets, but no special emphasis on its priority value was found either in the orders of the command of the 41st BAD or in the orders of the command of the 2nd SAD. So, the 2nd SAD, having 142 serviceable bombers in its arsenal, allocated for a raid on the Utti airfield

one link (three aircraft) from the 44th BAP, which link once bombed Utti from a height of 6.5 km. The 41st BAD bombed the airfields of Valkeala and Utti, while performing a total of 12 sorties (for the two named airfields). This can hardly be called the fulfillment of the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24, which demanded *"continuous raids day and night to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields."*

4. The ports of the Gulf of Bothnia (Oulu and Vaasa), through which the 169th Wehrmacht Infantry Division was delivered to Finland (and in which, probably, some units of German troops still remained), were not subjected to a single blow - and this despite the fact that the distance from the airfields based on long-range bombers of the KBF Air Force (1st MTAP, Bezzabotnoye airfield and 57th BAP, Kotly airfield) is no more than 600-650 km. This undoubtedly corresponds to the range of the DB-3/DB-3f long-range bombers, which were in service with the two indicated regiments in the amount of 91 serviceable aircraft.

5. If the bombardment of the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia could be considered a belated attempt to "catch up with the departed train", then the destruction of the Oulu-Rovaniemi-Salla railway line could have the most serious consequences, since the entire grouping of German troops in the Arctic was supplied through it. And yet, even attempts to solve this problem were not made, and **not a single raid on the railway stations of this highway was made.**

Now let's approach the assessment of the course and outcome of the air strike on June 25-26 from the other side: what objects actually became targets for bombers?

In total, at least 12 targets were attacked (excluding airfields), namely: - large railway stations (Riihimäki, Kouvola, Luumäki, Lappeenranta, Mantyhärju, Mikkeli, Joensuu); - the main ports of the Gulf of Finland (Turku, Salo,

Porvoo, Kotka); suburbs of Helsinki. If we now compare this list with the pre-war Plan for covering

the mobilization and operational deployment of the troops of the Northern Front (Leningrad District), we will immediately find a clear similarity of goals and objectives: *"Powerful strikes against the Kouvola railway junction, bridges across the river. Kyumin-Yoki and groupings of troops to disrupt and delay the concentration and deployment of enemy troops ... by active aviation operations to ensure air superiority and powerful strikes to disrupt transportation in the concentration in the area of Joensuu, Kayaani, Kuopio ..."* The 12 airfields of the southern and central Finland, which were to become the targets of priority strikes:

Kouvola, Kotka, Utti, Selyanpya, Mikkeli, Porvoo, Lahti, Hollola, Hiidula, Podosjoki, Savolinn, Hamina. Most likely, having received on June 24 the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code, the command of the Air Force of the Northern Front (as well as the command of the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet) took

out pre-war operational plans from the safe and based them on orders for the "first multi-day operation." And in this case, one cannot but admit that the Headquarters simply did not leave them time either for additional reconnaissance of targets or for careful preparation of the strike itself (interaction with fighters, the optimal choice of ammunition, etc.). Which, however, does not remove the question of why half of the "advance-identified enemy airfields" did not exist at all and, conversely, many



the most important airfields (Vesivshmaa, Naarajärvi, Joroinen, Hyvinkä, Siikakangas, Luonetjärvi) were not included in this list.

In general, the "first multi-day operation of the Soviet Air Force" is simply striking in its disorganization and inefficiency. Let's re-read the description of this operation in the version of Major General, Professor and Doctor of Science M.N. Kozhevnikova: "... *The Air Force Command of the Northern Front developed and on June 24 approved by the Military Council of the Northern Front a plan for the destruction of enemy aircraft at airfields in the north-western direction. A total of 540 aircraft were involved in the operation.*

*Early on the morning of June 25, 236 bombers and 224 fighters launched the first massive attack on 19 airfields. The enemy, not expecting such a strike, was actually taken by surprise and failed to organize countermeasures. As a result, Soviet pilots successfully bombed aircraft stands, fuel and ammunition depots. 41 enemy planes were destroyed at the airfields. Our aviation had no losses. In the next five days, several more effective strikes were delivered on the*

*same airfields and those newly discovered by air reconnaissance. According to aerial photographic control, Soviet pilots, having attacked a total of 39 airfields, made about 1,000 sorties, destroyed and disabled 130 enemy aircraft. The command of the fascist German troops in Finland and Northern Norway was forced to withdraw its aviation to distant rear airfields and abandon the raid on Leningrad in the near future ...* "The only words of truth in this text should be recognized as geographical names (Leningrad, Finland, Norway) and the name of the month

(June). Everything else - against the background of real, tragic and shameful facts - looks like an example of "black humor". The operation lasted exactly two days, and already on the second day (June 26), the bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front carried out

only a few reconnaissance flights over Finnish territory. The total number of airfields actually based on Finnish aviation, which became the object of a bomb attack, is five (Turku, Valkeala, Utti, Mikkeli, Joroinen). Perhaps one more airfield can be added to this list, which was named by the navigator of the 1st MTAP as "Lahti airfield" (perhaps it was the airfield in Hollola). If we take into account the polar airfield Luostari, then the total number of airfields attacked with almost no results will reach seven. **Only at one airfield (Turku) was a single aircraft disabled.** By a strange twist of fate, it turned out to be a captured Soviet SB bomber. All other "airfield strikes" were either completely ineffective, or led to heavy losses of the attackers (9 bombers of the 72nd BAP, shot down during a raid on the Joroinen airfield). In two days, the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet irrevocably lost 24 bombers. **The main Finnish fighter airfields (Pori, Hyvinkä, Vesivehmaa, Joroinen, Naarajärvi) were not damaged at all.** There was no "relocation of enemy aircraft to distant rear airfields" at all. Absolutely fantastic figures ("*39 airfields*", "*130 enemy aircraft*") cannot be even remotely connected with any real events ...

Such a **striking discrepancy between the declared goal and the achieved result** forces us to return to history again with the advent of the directive of the Civil Code of June 24. Where did the information about the deployment of German aviation in Finland come from, and even on an especially large scale? And if the authors of this directive themselves believed in the presence of large German aviation forces on the territory of Finland, then how could they approve the operation plan, according to which "small groups of 3-5 aircraft" were to fly out to bomb Finnish airfields, and even without fighter escort? Such tactics led to large and completely unjustified losses even in a collision with a small Finnish aviation (armed, moreover, with obsolete and physically worn-out fighters). How could it all end if hundreds of the latest Messerschmitts actually stood at the airfields of southern Finland? Let's re-read the first, stating part of the directive of the Civil Code Headquarters: *"1. From reliable sources it has been established that German troops are concentrating on*

*the territory of Finland, with the aim of striking at Leningrad and capturing the Murmansk region and Kandalaksha. To date, up to four infantry divisions have been concentrated in the Rovaniemi area. Kemijärvi and a group of unidentified numbers in the areas of Kotka and north of the Hanko Peninsula.*

*German aviation also systematically arrives on the territory of Finland, from where it carries out raids on our territory. According to the available bottom, the German command intends to launch an air strike on Leningrad in the near future. This circumstance is of decisive importance.*

*2. In order to prevent and disrupt an air strike on Leningrad, planned by the German command in Finland. I ORDER..."*

It is impossible not to notice the obvious inconsistency of this text: unnamed "reliable sources" established that German troops of "unspecified numbers" were concentrated in the territory of southern Finland. If the size of the grouping has not

been established even tentatively, and the area of its deployment has been determined with an "accuracy" of 200 km (from Hanko to Kotk), then what was the "reliability" of these mysterious "sources" manifested in? It is worth noting the very strange starting area for the deployment of the group, which allegedly *"is preparing to strike at Leningrad."* How can one get to Leningrad from the strip of the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland? Carry out an amphibious landing operation under the cover of two ill-fated battleships? Or wait until the bay is covered with solid ice? On the other

hand, the size of **the real grouping** of German troops in the Arctic is determined very accurately (*"up to four infantry divisions"*). In fact, two mountain rifle divisions were deployed in the Petsamo area, and one infantry division (169th infantry division) and the SS motorized brigade "Nord" were deployed in the Kemijärvi-Salla area. The task assigned by the German command to these formations is precisely defined (*"to capture the region of Murmansk and Kandalaksha"*). In parentheses, we note that this is by no means a trivial conclusion. Although both of these toponyms (Murmansk and Kandalaksha) are found on the same line on the pages of most books devoted to the events of the war in the Arctic, in reality these two cities are separated by a strip of deserted rocky desert 200 km wide. capture

Murmansk and Kandalaksha are not one, but two independent operations, during which the troops of the two strike groups will not have an "elbow connection". The German command itself for a long time doubted the advisability of conducting these two operations simultaneously, and military historians argue about this to this day.

The mistake in determining the area of concentration of German troops (*"concentrated up to four infantry divisions in the area of Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi"*) is at least understandable. Until the morning of June 22, German troops (169 infantry division and the SS brigade "Nord") were really only in the Rovaniemi-Kemijärvi area. The grouping aimed at capturing Murmansk (2nd and 3rd mountain rifle divisions) crossed the Norwegian-Finnish border in the Kirkenes-Petsamo zone only on June 22.

The fact that on June 24 in Moscow this fact was not yet known and realized is a gross, but at the same time quite understandable and understandable mistake - the high command simply did not have time to receive and evaluate new intelligence information.

As for the grouping of troops of the potential enemy on the front of the 23rd Army (in the north of the Karelian Isthmus), it was also determined by the military intelligence forces of the Northern Front (Leningrad VO) very close to reality. In fact, there were no German troops in southern Finland at all, but in the strip from the coast of the Gulf of Finland to st. Parikkala concentrated (after the completion of the mobilization and operational deployment of the Finnish army, i.e. in early July 1941) seven infantry divisions: the 2nd AK as part of the 2nd infantry division, the 15th infantry division, the 18th infantry division, the 4th th AK as part of the 4th front. 8th Infantry Division, 12th Infantry Division, as well as the 10th Infantry Division, which is in the reserve of the army command (see map No. 13). In addition, the 17th

Infantry Division was deployed in the area north of the Hanko Peninsula. Now let's turn to the documents of the 23rd Army and the 10th MK. Combat order No. 01 (16.30 on June 23) of the headquarters of the 23rd Army determines the size of the enemy as follows : army. - M.S) *and up to 7th infantry division in the Vyborg direction "* [306]. The number of the enemy, as we see, is established quite accurately, the only mistake was made in the assumption that there were German troops in this direction. By the end of June (that is, already after the appearance of the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24), erroneous intelligence data becomes noticeably larger: - Intelligence report No. 9 of the headquarters

of the 23rd Army (5.00 June 27),  
non-existent in reality *"tank regiment in the area of Imatra-Yakol"* [307].

- The final intelligence report of the headquarters of the 10th MK for June 22-29: *"By 28.6. the concentration of Finnish troops on our borders was basically completed. All types of reconnaissance established that at least nine infantry divisions with tanks, motorized infantry and motorcycle units were concentrated in front of the front of the 23rd Army. The presence of German light and medium tanks was established. The presence of heavy tanks is also assumed ... "* [308].

So, rumors about the presence of German tanks are intensifying, the number of infantry divisions of the Finnish army is overestimated by 29% of reality (9 instead of 7). As you can see, there are mistakes in the work of intelligence, but by

percentages, and not at all at times. And in any case, there is no reason to assume that the military intelligence of the Northern Front did not imagine the situation beyond the border line at all.

Regarding **the number and deployment of German aviation in Finland**, the ill-fated directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code does not say anything specific at all (*"German aviation also systematically arrives on the territory of Finland"*). Where? How many? One can only guess why this indistinct "stay" suddenly acquired "decisive significance". The only concrete (but at the same time absolutely fantastic) figures are found only in one of the records of the "Chronicles of the War in the Northern Theater" (compiled in 44–45 on the basis of a combat log and other documents of the headquarters of the Northern Fleet). In the entry dated June 27 (that is, after receiving the directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code), the following information appears: *"According to the military intelligence of the North-Western Front (as in the text. - M.S.), the total number of German aviation in the northern part of Norway reached 400 aircraft, in Finland - 600 aircraft" [224].*

The Northwestern Front (i.e. the former Baltic Military District) had nothing to do with northern Norway. Most likely, the compilers of the document were mistaken, and the Northern Front (ie, the former Leningrad Military District) was meant. However, in the documents of the headquarters of the Northern Front, "600 German aircraft in Finland" are by no means found. The number of German aircraft is continuously monitored only in the intelligence reports of the headquarters of the 1st SAD (Murmansk). Aircraft, judging by these reports, are located there. where they were in reality, i.e. in Norway. Their number is set very close to reality: - Intelligence report No. 4 (19.00

on June 23) *"p. 2 Enemy aviation was based on airfields: Hebukten - up to 50 aircraft, Banak - up to 32, Tromsø - up to 30, Narvik - up to 20, Bode (Bule) - up to 11, Trondheim - up to 45" [309].* - Reconnaissance report No. 10 (23.00 on June 26)

*"at 18.10, 8-10 bombers and 6-8 fighters were camouflaged at the Luostari airfield, up to 12 aircraft were stationed at the Rovaniemi airfield" [310].*

Comparing these reports with the real state of affairs known today, we see that the total number of aircraft of the 5th Luftwaffe Air Fleet in Norway is significantly underestimated (188 instead of about 280), but the number of aircraft of the "Kirkenes formation" (at Hebukten and Banak airfields) is practically indicated exactly. In other words, the reconnaissance of the 1st SAD had a very vague idea of the number of German aviation in the far south of Norway (i.e., thousands of kilometers from Murmansk), but it identified its direct enemy quite accurately. The June 26 report significantly overestimated the number of aircraft at the Finnish Luostari airfield, but on the whole the intelligence information bears a strong resemblance to reality. Approximately the same picture emerges from the documents of the headquarters of

the Northern Fleet (quoted from the "Chronicle", the airfield of Kirkenes for uniformity of the entire text will be referred to as Hebukten, the airfield of Lakselven - as Banak).

- Record dated June 24: *"According to the radio intelligence of the Northern Fleet, there were 62 aircraft in Hebukten, of which 11 were Yu-87, 7 Khsh-126, 11 Me-110 and Me-109, 3 Courier, 6 Storch, 4 Yu-52 (42 in total, the rest were probably identified as civilian. - M.S.), at the Banak airfield - 30 aircraft, including an unidentified number of Xe-111, in Tromsø - up to 20 aircraft"*

- Record dated June 26: *"According to the radio intelligence of the Northern Fleet, enemy aircraft were stationed: in Hebukten - 23 bombers, 12 reconnaissance aircraft, 6 fighters*

*and 6 transport; in Banaka - 7 bombers, 2 fighters and 7 transports; 17 aircraft in Tromsø, 12 aircraft in Bodø, 18 aircraft in Narvik and 34 Ju-87 aircraft in Trondheim" [224].*

The number and types of Luftwaffe combat aircraft at the Hebukten and Banak airfields have been established with a sufficient degree of reliability (in fact, there were 54 bombers and long-range reconnaissance aircraft, 26 Bf-109 and Me-110 fighters). In any case, no *"400 aircraft in the northern part of Norway"* and even more so - *"600 aircraft in Finland"* are not observed in intelligence reports from Murmansk.

The conclusion that can be drawn on the basis of all these documents is that the "reliable sources", on the basis of whose reports the mysterious directive of the General Staff Headquarters of June 24, was adopted, were somewhere very far from Leningrad and Murmansk, from the headquarters of the Northern Front and the Northern Fleet. Simply put, **the "reliable sources" were located in Moscow.** Neither the command of the Northern Front, nor the command of the Northern Fleet record the concentration of ground and air units of the enemy that do not actually exist, they themselves, without instructions from Moscow, are not preparing to repel mythical strikes. The high command demonstrates obvious incompetence. The most important decision is made hastily, the possible political consequences are not calculated even "one step ahead", intelligence is replaced by the collection of nonsense rumors, the operation is prepared and carried out based on blind luck and ends up as a result of a costly failure.

On this discussion of the reasons that prompted the Headquarters of the High Command (i.e., Comrade Stalin and his especially trusted advisers) to take a decision on June 24, 1941 to launch an air strike on Finland, could be completed. If on the same days in Moscow the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, the plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters on the Northern Front, the former Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, General of the Army K.A. Meretskov. This strange coincidence allows us to formulate another, extremely unsteady and practically unprovable hypothesis. Those interested can read it in the next chapter.

## Chapter

### 3.10 MERETSKOV'S ARREST

The hypothesis that will be presented in this chapter (we emphasize again the chapter that the reader can safely skip) is based on the following four assumptions.

1. The repressions that wave after wave rolled over the highest echelons of the Stalinist nomenklatura, including the leaders of the army, navy and military industry, were illegal - but they were not accidental.

If not all, then many arrests and executions were not caused by spontaneous outbursts of Stalin's blind anger, but reflected the merciless struggle of the clans in his inner circle. The outbreak of the war changed only the "price of the issue": if earlier the struggle was for proximity to the Master and the privileges associated with it, for positions, government orders, awards and orders, now life was at stake. According to the deeply correct remark of I. Bunich, *"the German generals, risking their own lives, conspired against Hitler, and the Soviet generals conspired to save their own lives."*

2. The main means of eliminating competitors was, of course, slander. In peacetime (if such a phrase is generally applicable to the history of the Stalinist empire), the content of slander could be very diverse: "sabotagely slowed down the commissioning of a new fighter", "sabotagely rushed to put into service an unreliable fighter that did not meet the requirements of the Air Force", "sabotagely underestimated plan for the production of armor-piercing shells in order to leave the Red Army unarmed in the face of the enemy", "sabotagely overestimated the plan for the production of armor-piercing shells in order to bring chaos and disorganization into the work of the military industry", etc. After the start of the war. all the more so - after SUCH a start, accusations of "loss of vigilance", "wrecking carelessness", "criminal inaction", etc. became the hottest commodity on the slander market. 3. The Hitlerite leadership, unlike Soviet historians, was not at all sure that that Finland

would enter the war. In addition, "to join the war" can be different. The provision of airfields and anchorages is one level of participation, the passage of German troops through the territory of northern Finland is another, and the total mobilization of all the human and economic resources of the country and the transition to the offensive with 16 divisions create a completely different situation. In Berlin, they understood that the alliance with the Nazis caused significant rejection in all sectors of Finnish society, and therefore they were extremely interested in the Red Army firing the "first shot".

Moreover, this "shot" had to be as noticeable and loud as possible. 4. After June 22, 1941, dozens of high-ranking commanders of the Red Army went over to the side of the enemy. It's not a hypothesis,

it's a fact. It is possible that some generals (and other leaders close to making the most important military decisions) began their cooperation with the enemy even before June 22, 1941.

Having decided on the initial assumptions, let us now get to know the main character of the historical tragedy more closely. Kirill

Afanasyevich Meretskov was born on June 7, 1897 in the village of Nazaryevo, Zaratisk district, Ryazan province. From the age of fifteen he worked as a mechanic at factories and factories in Moscow. In May 1917, at less than 20 years old, he joined the Bolshevik Party. In the summer of 1918, he organized a detachment of the Red Guard in the city of Sudogda, Vladimir province, with which he took part in the suppression of "kulak revolts". He was wounded in battle, after recovery he was sent to study at the newly created General Staff Academy. The civil war continued, and Meretskov, like other students of the Academy, went to the front several times. For some time in 1920 he was assistant chief of staff of the 6th Cavalry Division, commanded by Timoshenko, the future People's Commissar

of Defense of the USSR. After graduating from the Academy in 1921, the young staff officer began to rapidly rise through the ranks. In July 1928, at the age of 31, he became Deputy Chief of Staff of the Moscow Military District, then Chief of Staff of the Moscow and Belorussian Military Districts. In the Belorussian district, located on the border with the main potential enemy at that time - Poland, Meretskov was chief of staff under Uborevich - one of the most prominent Soviet commanders, who in 1937 became the main person involved in the "military Trotskyist conspiracy." In January 1935, Meretskov was appointed chief of staff of the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army, i.e. chief of staff of another future "enemy of the people" - holder of the Order of the Red Banner No. 1 (according to other sources, Order No. 1 was awarded to Nestor Makhno), the future Marshal Blucher. In the autumn of 1936, Meretskov was sent to Spain, where he served as military adviser to the General Staff of the Republican Army. Any of these three episodes of the biography: connection

with the "exposed enemy of the people" Uborevich, connection with the "exposed enemy of the people" Blucher, personal participation in Stalin's failed attempt to gain a foothold in the Pyrenees, would be enough to disappear forever in the bloody meat grinder of 1937-1938 years. So, in addition to everything, Meretskov in 1931 was also on an internship in Germany. However, nothing terrible happened - Meretskov continued his steady ascent, not missing "a single step." In September 1938, he was appointed commander of the Volga, and the following year - of the Leningrad military district. Despite the tragic failure of the plan he personally developed for the "liberation" of Finland, Meretskov received the star of the Hero of the Soviet Union, the rank of army general, and in August 1940 became chief of the General Staff of the Red Army.

Above this, only the post of People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR could be, but such a peak was inaccessible to Meretskov in principle - he was not among the status "heroes of the Civil War", associates of Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Budyonny, Kulik in the 1st Cavalry Army, Stalin's accomplices in reprisal with Trotsky and Trotskyists. In any case, the position of Chief of the General Staff meant access to the most important military secrets of the country. The mobilization plan, plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, plans for the production of military equipment and ammunition, operational and mobilization plans for districts - all these top-secret documents passed through the hands of the Chief of the General Staff. Accordingly, the appointment

meant the highest degree of confidence Comrade Stalin had in the young (43 years old) general

of the army. In January 1941 Meretskov's continuous career curve made its first, as yet completely reversible, bend. Stalin appoints the "rising star" of the Soviet generals, the hero of Khalkhin-Gol G.K., to the post of Chief of the General Staff. Zhukov. Meretskov's resignation was more than honorable. He retained the rank of Army General and was appointed to the post of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR for combat training of troops. On the eve of the great war, this was an important post, the appointment to which again testified to the complete trust in Meretskov from Stalin and his inner circle, including the People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko himself.

On June 21, 1941, by decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee (that is, in fact, by the decision of Stalin), Meretskov was appointed plenipotentiary of the high command of the Red Army on the Northern Front and immediately left for the place of his new service in Leningrad. On June 23, 1941, on the second day of the war, the Headquarters of the High Command was created. Under the Headquarters, the institution of "permanent advisers to the Headquarters" was formed. Meretskov was one of them, along with such trusted people of Stalin as Molotov, Beria,

Shaposhnikov, Zhdanov, Kulik, Malenkov, Mekhlis... Meretskov's fall from the heights of power into the blinding darkness of the Lubyanka cellars was lightning fast and stunning. On June 23, he was recalled from Leningrad to Moscow and a few days later (the exact date of his arrest is unknown) he was handed over to the executioners of the NKGB. The only thing that can be said with all certainty is that the arrest of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense could not have taken place without the direct sanction of the "Master" himself. No "Beria satraps" independently resolved such issues (not to mention the fact that during the indicated period of time, Comrade Beria had no direct relationship with the leadership of the NKGB). In early September 1941, Meretskov was released and sent straight from his prison cell, again as a representative of the Headquarters, to the Karelian Front. Soon he was appointed commander of the 7th Army, then the Volkhov and Karelian fronts.

Meretskov's health and strength were irretrievably undermined. According to a common historical legend. Stalin even allowed the general, crippled by torture, to report while sitting. Khrushchev writes in his memoirs: *"When I saw Meretskov for the last time, it was no longer Meretskov, but his shadow. He used to be a young general, a physically strong, strong man, but now he could barely walk ..."* Although Meretskov did not achieve great (and small) successes in commanding the fronts, Stalin awarded him the rank of marshal (October 26, 1944) and cavalier the highest military order "Victory" (September 8, 1945). In August 1945, Stalin allowed Meretskov to become the figurehead of the 1st Far Eastern Front and the victor of the Japanese Kwantung Army. The epithet "nominal" is only a statement of the sad truth - Meretskov did not know either the troops entrusted to him or the enemy; the last time he was in the Far East was 9 years ago. And if Japan by that time had not already been knocked out by American bombing, then such a command could have led to the most unfortunate consequences ... But Stalin, apparently, decided to give Meretskov the opportunity to enter the history of the war in the halo of at least one bright victory. Around the story of the unexpected arrest and even more surprising release of K.A. Meretskov grew a lot of all sorts of legends. In particular, it is often necessary to read



that "Meretskov's arrest was a foregone conclusion long before June 1941." As proof of this thesis, rumors are cited that by the time of the arrest, "investigators" had already accumulated testimonies from 40 people about Meretskov's "sabotage activities". Such "logic" is based, alas, on an elementary misunderstanding of the mechanism of functioning of the Stalinist dictatorship. Compromising evidence was constantly accumulated **on every** top military or party dignitary without exception. This system was debugged and put on "line production". Moreover, according to the procedure established at the end of the 30s, the "specialists" regularly reported to the top commanders of the Red Army the "compromising evidence" accumulated on their subordinates. The revealing "testimonies" of 40 or 140 informants, stored in a secret safe, were the same integral attribute of the lifestyle of the highest Stalinist nomenclature, like a black official car (the brand of which was strictly ranked depending on the position held), a state dacha with inventory numbers on tables and sofas, a clinic closed to mere mortals ...

Let us explain what has been said with one, but extremely striking example. On May 8, 1940, Stalin released Voroshilov from the post of People's Commissar of Defense. And not just "released" - but gave me to sign a parting multi-page "Act on the reception of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR comrade. Timoshenko from comrade. Voroshilov" [146]. This amazing document listed two dozen areas of work for the defense department. for each of which, "unsatisfactory condition", "exceptional neglect" and substitution of the case with "paper reports" were stated. Moreover, this "indictment", which clearly indicates that Comrade Voroshilov destroyed the country's defense as thoroughly and comprehensively as he could not have destroyed it and the enemy agent who made his way to the Kremlin, signed (except for Voroshilov himself) the new People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko and two secretaries Central Committee - Zhdanov and Malenkov. And what? Did this act testify that "Voroshilov's arrest was already a foregone conclusion"? Yes, nothing like that - Voroshilov was then appointed to the highest post of head of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Formally speaking, People's Commissar Tymoshenko was subordinate to him. On June 30, 1941, the "marshal-saboteur" Voroshilov became a member of the State Defense Committee, i.e. among those five people (Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Malenkov, Beria), in whose hands all power in the country was concentrated. It is noteworthy that neither the People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko, nor the then Chief of the General Staff Zhukov were included in this "five of the strongest".

The arrest of Army General Meretskov was not an isolated occurrence in those crazy days. Starting from the second half of May 1941, an avalanche of arrests of the so-called "Aviator Case" rolled through the highest echelon of the military leadership of the USSR, growing more and more in size. Within two months, without stopping for the war, were arrested:

- three former commanders of the Red Army Air Force (Loktionov, Smushkevich, Rychagov); - Head of the Main Directorate of Air Defense of the USSR (Stern); - Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force for Long-Range Aviation (Proskurov); - Chief of Staff of the Red Army Air Force and his deputy (Volodin and Yusupov); - Commander of the Air Force of the Far Eastern Front (Gusev); - Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad Military District (Levin); - Commander of the Air Force of the North-Western Front (Ionov);

- Commander of the Air Force of the Western Front (Tayursky); - Commander of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force of the

Southwestern Front (Ptukhin and Laskin); - Commander of the Air Force of the Moscow Military District (Pumpur); - Assistant Commander of the Air Force of the Oryol Military District (Shakht); - Assistant Commander of the Air Force of the Volga Military District (Alekseev); - Head of the

Military Academy of Command and

Navigators of the Air Force (Arzhenukhin); - Head of the Air

Force Research Institute (Filin); - Head of the NIP of aviation weapons (Shevchenko). This list is, of course, far from complete. It includes only commanders of the highest rank.

Simultaneously with the "case of aviators", the "case of gunners" was unfolding (albeit at a somewhat slower pace and scale), within the framework of which the people's commissar for armaments Vannikov, the people's commissar for ammunition Sergeev, his deputies Khodyakov, Inyashkin, Shibanov and Khrenkov, the deputy head of the GAU Savchenko, were arrested, his deputies, designers of artillery systems, dozens of other commanders, engineers, managers ...

Meretskov's arrest took place simultaneously with the arrests of aviation commanders.

That, however, cannot in itself serve as evidence of the relationship between these "cases". In any case, one - and at the same time very important - difference is that Meretskov was released, and all the above-named defendants in the "aviator case" were shot. They were shot in several "passes" from October 16, 1941 to February 23, 1942, but everyone was shot. But Stalin pardoned Meretskov, which can probably be considered **the biggest oddity and mystery of the Meretskov case**.

Turning now from rumors, riddles and conjectures to documents, we find that today exactly two documents are known that are directly related to the story of the arrest and release of Meretskov. Both of these documents were published

by the Trud newspaper, No. 230 of December 14, 2001. It sounds somewhat strange and not at all "academic", but the reality is exactly that. The first "document" is a message from the leadership of the Central Archive of the FSB that the investigation file of K.A. Meretskov destroyed. That's right - not lost, not classified, but destroyed. The second document is a letter with which, on August 28, 1941, Meretskov himself turned to Stalin. This letter, which, according to sound logic, should have been destroyed along with the supposedly destroyed "Meretskov case", was not destroyed. The central archive of the FSB kindly provided (and could, we note, not provide it - the archive is departmental, it is not included in the system of the state archival service, decisions of the smallest clerks of this institution are not subject to appeal) to Trud correspondent Sergei Turchenko this document, which was published in the article Letter from Lefortovo. Here is the full text of it

letters:

*"To the Secretary of the Central Committee*

*of the CPSU (b) Stalin I.V. In a tense time for our country, when every citizen is required to devote himself completely to the defense of the Motherland, I, having some military practice, am isolated and cannot take part in the liberation of our Motherland from enemy invasions. Previously working for responsible*

*posts, I always carried out your instructions conscientiously and with full effort*

*forces.*

*I ask you once again to entrust me, to let me go to the front and in any work that You will find it possible to give me, to prove my devotion to you and the Motherland.*

*I have been preparing for a war with the Germans for a long time, I want to fight them, I despise them for their brazen attack on our country, give me the opportunity to fight, I will take revenge on them to my last opportunity, I will not spare myself to the last drop of blood, I will fight until the enemy is completely destroyed. I will take all measures to be useful for you, for the army and for our great people.*

*28.VIII. - 41 K. Meretskov.*

What meaningful information can be extracted from this text? Not a single word was explicitly said about the reasons for the arrest, about the charges brought against him. There are no words in this letter, so natural in such circumstances, about one's own innocence, about the falsity and groundlessness of the accusations.

And only in the last paragraph does a phrase appear that deserves close attention: *"I have been preparing for a war with the Germans for a long time, I want to fight with them, I despise them for their brazen attack on our country, give me the opportunity to fight ..."* Strange words. The third month there is a war, already called the Great Patriotic War. According to official data, two million people signed up for the people's militia from among those who have a legal exemption from conscription for mobilization. And at such and such a time, a professional military man with the rank of general of the army considers it necessary to prove, convince, assure Stalin that he "wants to fight the Germans", that he "despises" them. Why did it happen? It

remains to be assumed that someone (perhaps Stalin himself) earlier doubted Meretskov's desire to "fight the Germans".

The assumption is not so unbelievable. At least, a real and documented case is known when Comrade Stalin asked such questions. It was August 1, 1938, during an armed conflict with the Japanese at the infamous Lake Khasan. Then Stalin, in a telephone conversation with the commander of the troops of the Far Eastern Front, Marshal Blucher, asked him the following question: *"Tell me, Comrade Blucher, honestly, do you have a desire to really fight the Japanese? If you don't have such a desire, say it straight out, as befits a communist..."* [146]. There is no doubt that Marshal Blucher answered such a question directly, correctly, "as befits a communist." But this did not help to change the fate prepared for him ...

In addition to Meretskov's letter to Stalin, which was published relatively recently, there are also widely known, repeatedly republished memoirs of Marshal Meretskov [93]. The mysterious story connected with the arrest and the happy deliverance from the inevitable, it would seem, execution, is bypassed in the memoirs by complete, absolute silence. At first sight. On closer reading, one can find a rather strange fragment in Meretskov's memoirs, possibly having the most direct relation both to the mystery of the arrest and to the main topic of our study. Since the style in this case is just as important as the content, the quote will inevitably be long: *"...Probably, millions of Soviet people still remember how they spent the evening before the unforgettable Sunday of June 22, 1941. I have not forgotten this evening either.*

*I was summoned to my immediate superior, the People's Commissar for Defense, who had been in a particularly tense state for the last few days. And although I understood the reason for his nervous state, although I saw with my own eyes what was happening on the western border, the words of the people's commissar entered my consciousness with unusual sharpness and anxiety. S.K. Timoshenko said then:*

*Maybe tomorrow the war will start! You need to be as a representative of the High Command in the Leningrad Military District. You know his troops well and will be able to help the leadership of the district if necessary. The main thing is not to succumb to provocations. What are my powers in the*

*event of an armed attack? I asked. - Resilience first. Be able to distinguish a real attack from local incidents and prevent them from escalating into a war. But be on alert. In the event of an attack, you yourself know what to do.*

*So, the old setting continues to operate. Preserve peace for the country as far as possible: for a year, for half a year, for a month. We'll harvest. We will build new defense enterprises. The next mechanized corps will come into operation. We will establish the production of high-speed aircraft. Perhaps the international situation will improve. And even if it does not improve, if the war does start, but not now, but later, then it will be easier to enter into it. Buy time by all means! Another month, another half a month, another week. The war may start tomorrow. But we must try to use everything so that it does not start tomorrow. To do the maximum possible and even a fraction of the impossible..." [93].*

In the light of everything that is known today about the plans and actions of the top military-political leadership of the USSR, persistent verbose arguments about "harvesting" and building "new defense enterprises" look like some kind of delirium. On the evening of June 21, 1941, the Kremlin clearly realized that only a few days or even hours remained before the start of the war. It was already too late to hope for "an improvement in the international situation". It will not be possible to build new enterprises, or to harvest the harvest that is just ripening in the fields before the start of hostilities. There could be no more doubt about it. According to military intelligence reports, the Germans were removing wire fences on the border, and the roar of engines of tanks going to the border hung in the air. To the east of the border, on the basis of the border military districts, the fronts were already deployed, the headquarters of which, on the orders of People's Commissar Timoshenko, were advanced to field command posts. The countdown went to hours and minutes, and the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Army General Meretskov knew this very well. What are the "harvests" here ...

Everything absurd becomes absolutely logical if we only assume that it was **not a war with Germany, but a war with Finland**. That's when this whole long, emotionally charged monologue becomes quite reasonable. Even if the war with Finland starts "a month, half a month, a week" later, this will already give a huge gain for the Red Army. Both Timoshenko and Meretskov on the evening of June 21 understood that Hitler was still able to get ahead of them. The Red Army will have to enter the war in an extremely difficult situation: mobilization has not yet been completed (although a lot has been done within the framework of covert mobilization), the operational deployment of groupings of troops in the western theater of operations is just beginning, dozens of divisions of the Second Strategic Echelon are in railway cars scattered on

gigantic spaces from the Far East to Smolensk and Shepetovka. Another enemy (Finland) and another active front on the northern approaches to Leningrad is not the time at all.

Timoshenko, Meretskov, and Stalin himself did not expect a catastrophe of such a scale that actually happened. In Moscow, they hoped that even in such an unfavorable situation, the Red Army would only move back a little, and then be able to go on the counteroffensive. It's not a hypothesis, it's a fact. Directive No. 3, sent to the troops at 9 pm on June 22, signed by Timoshenko and Zhukov, set the task of occupying Lublin and Suwalki "by the end of June 24." Perhaps it was the usual "Soviet planning": if you want to get a brick machine, order two, one, maybe they will bring it. Even if not on June 24, but on July 4, Stalin hoped to transfer hostilities to enemy territory in the very near future. With such ideas about the possible development of the military-political situation, it was extremely

important to delay the start of the war with Finland for at least a couple of weeks. After the Red Army went on a decisive offensive in the West, the Finnish leadership would think ten times about whether it needed to "fasten" its country to the crumbling cart of the Third Reich. That is why on the evening of June 21, Meretskov could have been given the task of *"doing the maximum possible and even a fraction of the impossible"* so that the war with Finland "does not start tomorrow."

On the following pages of Meretskov's memoirs, we find direct confirmation of the hypothesis that **he believed in the possibility of delaying the start of the war with Finland and strove for the realization of this possibility.** *"... So far it has been calm on the Soviet-Finnish border. Apparently, Finland was waiting to make the most favorable decision for itself. But how long was she going to wait? A month, a week, a day?.. In this regard, I instructed a group of district headquarters officers to calculate what and how much the district may need in various situations, if Finland comes out immediately, comes out later or does not come out at all (emphasis mine. - **M.S**) ; if they send reinforcements to us, they don't send them, or we ourselves will have to help other districts, etc. ... In peacetime it is impossible to foresee all the combinations that may arise after the start of the war, especially when the war itself does not go as expected. In such cases, it is necessary to show maximum efficiency and restructure plans in accordance with the specific circumstances ... "*

On June 23, 1941, the setting for the maximum possible delay in the start of hostilities was actually confirmed by the instructions received by the headquarters of the Northern Front and the Northern Fleet "do not fly over or cross the border, do not carry out any military operations against Finland until further notice!"

Then laziness came on June 24, and **someone reported to Stalin the information received from "reliable sources" about that. that huge forces of German aviation are concentrated on Finnish airfields** (600 combat aircraft, i.e. even more than it was in reality as part of the entire 1st Luftwaffe Air Fleet). This "someone" was able to convince Stalin of the reliability of his mysterious "sources". Perhaps, after what happened on the morning of June 22 on the Western Front, Stalin did not have to be convinced for a long time. In an atmosphere of general nervousness and confusion that reigned in the Kremlin in those days and hours, it was immediately and without

reasoning, the decision was made to "deliver a preemptive strike on enemy airfields in Finland." Perhaps Meretskov, who was not familiar with the reports

of the mysterious "reliable sources", had the imprudence to object. Maybe he just did not support the next wise decision of the omniscient "leader" not ardently enough. In an environment that has already reached the limits of mass insanity - "spy mania" this could be enough to raise the question: "Tell me honestly, Comrade Meretskov, as befits a communist, do you have a desire to really fight the Germans and their accomplices? If you do not have such a desire, tell me directly ... "

It was after this that all that happened. what happened in reality. Who and. most importantly, why did he plant this obvious disinformation on Stalin? There is no answer to this question, and it is unlikely that a reliable answer to such questions will be found in the foreseeable future. Disinformation could have been introduced through intelligence channels by the German secret services, which were extremely interested in provoking a full-scale war between Finland and the USSR. The people who reported this misinformation to Stalin themselves might not have realized that the enemy was using them for his own purposes. The option of direct and conscious

treason.

On the other hand, everything could have happened without the participation of the enemy, simply as part of the next bout of inter-clan struggle in Stalin's inner circle. Saving themselves or trying to "fill up" Timoshenko, someone could persistently draw Stalin's attention to the "myopia and criminal carelessness" of the army leadership, which had already "slept through" one sudden blow from the enemy and is now preparing to sleep through the second such blow against Leningrad. In a word, the field for conjectures and conspiracy theories opens up the widest ... Alas, within the framework of the existing (one might say, missing) source base, nothing more definite

impossible to say.

Suppose further that some time later, Stalin received exhaustive evidence that "reliable sources" had deceived him. This proof was the absence of at least single German air raids on Leningrad. No matter what and no matter how they reported to him about the "brilliant results" of the raid on the "German airfields in Finland", Stalin was not so naive and so ignorant of military affairs as to believe that the "Stalinist falcons" destroyed everything on earth in one fell swoop. 600 enemy aircraft. The absence of raids on Leningrad better than any undercover "sources" testified that there was no German aviation on Finnish airfields and never was. Moreover - and worse - by the end of the summer of 1941, Stalin received the most convincing evidence that Finland should not have been provoked into war. At the end of August 1941, the Finnish troops, without waiting for Stalin's "concessions", completely regained all the territories lost under the terms of the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940, and in Ladoga Karelia they even moved much further east from the 1939 border.

Sometimes, however, very rarely, Stalin recalled his faithful servants, who were "slandered by scoundrels." Rarely, but it happened. This happened, for example, with the arrested on June 7, 1941, the People's Commissar for Armaments Vannikov. In response to gratitude, Comrade Vannikov later headed the Soviet "atomic project" and handed Comrade Stalin "ammunition" unmeasured

relics. Well, at the beginning of September 1941, fate smiled at Meretskov as well.

## **Part 4**

### **Crash**



## Chapter 4.1

### “CARS WILL GO ON A FURIOUS TRAVEL...”

If the air strike on Finland, which took place on June 25-26, 1941, was at least occasionally mentioned in the especially thick books of Soviet historians, then practically nothing was written about the offensive operations of the Red Army ground forces on Finnish territory. Nevertheless, such actions took place in July 1941. Or, more precisely, they started, but were interrupted "on the very takeoff." It is necessary to remember them, because in order to assess the real combat effectiveness of the Red Army of the 1941 model, they will be as indicative as the results of the "crushing strike on Finnish airfields." The main striking force of the 23rd Army deployed

on the Karelian Isthmus was the 10th Mechanized Corps (commander Major General I.G. Lazarev). Like all other mechanized corps of the Red Army, the 10th MK consisted of three divisions: two tank divisions (21st TD and 24th TD) and one motorized division (198th MD). The most combat-ready division of the corps was the 21st Panzer Division, formed on the basis of the 40th Red Banner Tank Brigade - a veteran of the "winter war" battles. The weak link of the 10th MK was the 24th Panzer Division, which was formed on the basis of the 11th Reserve Tank Regiment and received heavily worn materiel from it: BT-2 - 133 and BT-5 - 94, a total of 227 tanks produced in 1932-1934 years. As for the 198th motorized division, it had only a few dozen serviceable tanks (with the regular strength of the tank regiment of a motorized division of 258 units) and, in fact, was an ordinary rifle division, albeit with an unusually large number of vehicles. As noted above, the pre-war operational plans of the western military districts (including the

Leningrad Military District) have not been published, so one can only guess about the specific tasks assigned to the 23rd Army of the Northern Front. Nevertheless, given the concentration behind the front of the 50th SC of the main reserves of the 23rd Army (10th mechanized corps, 70th rifle division) and the inclusion in the 50th SC of three artillery regiments of the RGK (101st, 108th, 519th) out of four, it can be assumed that according to the plans of the Soviet command, the main events of the "active defense" were to occur in the strip between the coast of the Gulf of Finland and the Vuoksi River (see map No. 6).

The same intentions were attributed to the enemy. In the combat journal (ZhBD) of the 23rd Army we read (an entry dated June 23): *"The enemy continues to intensively concentrate troops to the state border, mainly in the direction of Lappeenranta-Vyborg and Hamina (a village on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, 30 km from the border. — M.S.) - Vyborg, as well as in the areas of Lake. Puraujärvi and Yakola (that is, between Imatra and Enso. - M.S.), pulling up the motorized parts" [347].* Later we will see that such an assessment of the situation and the enemy grouping turned out to be

profoundly erroneous. On the eve of the war, the divisions of the 10th mechanized corps were stationed in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pavlovsk, Gatchina) and in order to advance to the deployment area behind the front of the 50th SC (in the Vyborg-Heinioki-Kyamarya triangle), tank divisions had to travel 170-180 km on their own .

This task proved to be very difficult for them. Even in the better-trained and better-equipped 21st Panzer D

the march lasted two days, and the tanks used up 14–15 engine hours, which clearly indicates that a significant part of the “march” consisted of standing in traffic jams and traffic jams. In one of the two tank regiments of the division (42nd Tank Regiment), by 13:00 on June 24, 75 out of 91 tanks entered the assembly area [348]. 16 tanks remained on the route due to various technical

malfunctions. The 24th Panzer Division literally crumbled during the march. 49 tanks (22 BT-2 and 27 BT-5) turned out to be out of order and were left at the place of permanent deployment of the division. At 15.00 on June 23, 178 tanks set out on a campaign, of which by the end of the day on June 26 only 92 tanks had crawled to the indicated deployment area, and only 62 of them were considered combat-ready. “*Their current repairs are hampered by the lack of tools and spare parts*” [349]. Yes, there have always been big problems with tools and spare parts in this division. And not only with the tool: “*... Both cold machine parks required a major overhaul of the ceiling and the installation of new doors. Machines that did not have enough space in the parks stand in the open air, and it was impossible to cover them due to the lack of a tarpaulin ... In the stationary workshops from mechanical equipment there were two worn-out lathes and one drilling machine ... Combat and auxiliary vehicles, with the exception of those received from Izhora plant 17 BA-10 armored vehicles were not equipped with a transportable individual set of spare parts, tools and accessories. For the repair of combat and auxiliary vehicles, there was a lack of sloth cranks, track tracks, side clutches, starters, batteries, axle shafts, intermediate exhaust pipes, exhaust manifolds and gaskets for them, springs and shock absorbers ...*” [312]. We have quoted such an extensive quotation from a monograph on the short history of the 24th Panzer Division,

mainly considering the publication date of this book - 2006. A fairly young author reproduced in the best possible way and even multiplied the traditions of the “lament of Yaroslavna”, formed in classical Soviet historiography. Judging by the long list of missing pipes, gaskets, doors and tarpaulins, the war came as a stunning surprise for this military unit, just as the sowing and harvesting seasons hit the collective farm MTS every year with their unexpected arrival. But there is one big difference: the MTS was sometimes located in the remote Siberian taiga, a hundred kilometers from the nearest railway station, and the 24th Panzer Division suffered from a lack of wrenches and screwdrivers 20 km from Leningrad, the largest center of the USSR military industry. And the tank divisions in the Leningrad Military District were not a thousand and one, but only four ... The Military Council of the Northern Front finally turned its attention to the amazing “order in tank units” on June 28, 1941. On this day, the Front Armed Forces issued order

No. 143532, specially dedicated to the march of the 24th Panzer Division: “*The march of the 24th Panzer Division to the assembly area was poorly organized. The division arrived in the area unprepared for a combat mission. Most of the combat vehicles were left along the way. Only on the Pargolovo-Kivennapa section on June 25, 1941, at 18:00, 39 vehicles of the division were out of order or without fuel ... The vehicles were left on the road without technical assistance and the crews were left to themselves. The commanders of the division and regiments did not take timely measures to search for and*

*providing technical assistance to lagging vehicles. Also, care was not shown for the personnel of these vehicles, which were left without food and ate accidentally (exclusively bread) from passing military units ... " [350].*

It is worth paying attention to the phrase about "lack of fuel." Wheel-tracked BT tanks had a cruising range of more than 200 km on tracks and more than 400 km on wheels. From Pavlovsk to Vyborg, they could reach without a single refueling on the march ... Fortunately, all this happened on their own territory, without any influence from the air or ground enemy. In the end, the lagging vehicles were filled with gasoline, burned-out pipes and gaskets were changed for them, and on June 28 the division received 49 relatively new BT-5 tanks [351]. As a result, by June 28, 1941, there were already 177 tanks, 33 armored vehicles, 324 vehicles of all types and purposes, 15 radio stations (not counting tank ones), as well as 6895 personnel [312]. The tanks of the 10th mechanized corps did not have to stand in the

concentration area for a long time. As soon as the 10th MK was within the "reach zone" of the command of the 23rd Army, then all the Charters, all the Instructions, the whole pre-war theory about the massive use of tanks as part of large **mechanized** formations, all the lessons of the German "blitzkrieg" in the West, repeatedly studied in staff exercises - everything was immediately rejected and forgotten. Ten BA-10 armored vehicles "to guard the

army headquarters", five tanks "to operate together with the 115th rifle division", a tank battalion of 24 vehicles "at the disposal of the commander of the 43rd rifle division", a tank company of 10 vehicles "at the disposal of the commander of the 19th Rifle Corps", a tank battalion consisting of 2 companies (20 BT tanks) "to reinforce the 123rd Rifle Division", five tank platoons of three vehicles from each division "for anti-tank defense in the strip of rifle corps", anti-aircraft a battery of the 24th Panzer Division "to cover the headquarters of the 23rd Army" ... Strange work was carried out in the zone of the 123rd Rifle Division by

the forces of the pontoon-bridge battalion of the 24th Panzer Division. The 123rd SD was on the left flank of the 23rd Army (see map No. 13). The small forest river Tervajoki flows in the defense zone of this division. This is not a big obstacle in the way of the enemy, who (as was assumed at the headquarters of the 23rd Army) will attack, and even with tanks, from the Hamina-Vyborg direction, but military sappers know many ways in which a natural river barrier can be strengthened. Paragraph 409 of the Field Manual PU-39 gives the following instructions: *"The defensive properties of the river line can be strengthened, in addition to artificially raising the water level (waterlogging), by a system of artificial barriers (increasing the steepness of the banks, setting mines and wire obstacles in the water, etc.) "* However, the sappers of the 24th Panzer Division were not engaged in increasing the "steepness of the coast", but in building a bridge across the Tervajoki [312]. For what? Nothing is said about this in the documents known to the author.

Be that as it may, but by the end of June 1941, units and formations of the 10th mechanized corps deployed in the areas indicated by them, put military equipment in order after a multi-day march; command staff conducted a detailed reconnaissance of the area. Now it was time to act.

On the night of July 1-2, several events took place in different directions and several different combat orders were issued, which should be connected into a single picture

It's hard enough. In

the "Journal of Combat Actions" of the 21st Panzer Division [318] we read: "... at 24.00 on July 1, 1941, the commander of the 10th MK, Major General Comrade, arrived at the command post of the headquarters of the division. Lazarev and set the task: to separate from the division RO (reconnaissance detachment) as part of a tank company, a motorized rifle company, a platoon of flamethrower tanks. The task of the RO is to cross the border in the ENSO region and then, acting in the direction of ENSO-IMATRA, conduct combat reconnaissance in the YAKOLA region (a village on the road between Enso and Imatra. - M.S.), IMATRA, st. TAINIOKOSKI and establish the forces, composition and grouping of the enemy.

At 1.40 2.7. a task was set and a combat order was received for the head of the RO, commander of the 21st RB (reconnaissance battalion of the 21st tank division), captain comrade Zhidkov ... Task by order of the division: at 6.00 2.7. cross the border in the ENSO area and conduct combat reconnaissance in the YAKOLA, IMATRA, st. TAINIOKOSKI and establish the forces, composition and grouping of the enemy. By capturing control prisoners, establish the numbering of enemy units, after mastering Art. IMATRA - blow up the station and set fire to the forest with flamethrower tanks. In case of successful action and capture of the lines: JAKOLA, IMATRA, art. TAINIOKOSKI - **hold them until our infantry approaches** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) "

Reconnaissance in force is carried out for the sole purpose of preparing for a subsequent offensive. In this case, this military axiom is additionally confirmed by the order to hold the captured lines "until the approach of our infantry." It is very important to emphasize that the decision to conduct reconnaissance in force in the direction of Imatra was not at all a manifestation of a private initiative of the command of the 21st Panzer Division. The task was set by the corps commander, who personally arrived at the command post of the division at midnight. Moreover, the commander of the 10th MK did not act on his own initiative. In the ZhBD of the 23rd Army, in the description of the events of July 2, 1941, the following entry is found: "Combat reconnaissance organized by the personal order of the commander (underlined by me. - M.S.) in the direction of Imatra as part of the tank group of the 10th MK and two battalions motorized rifle regiment, crossed the border in the afternoon" [317]. A noticeable discrepancy between the composition of the

reconnaissance group (in one document "a motorized rifle company" and "two battalions" in another) immediately finds its explanation in the following fragment from the ZhBD of the 21st Panzer Division: "...According to the instructions of the commander of the 10th MK [received] from Commander-23, **the infantry of the 115th SD** should be included in the composition of the RO, with a strength of up to a battalion (emphasized by me. - M.S.). Artillery of the 115th SD [ordered] to support the actions of the RO with 4 divisions. All work on the organization of these issues dragged on until 10.00 2.7, and the infantry battalion of the 115th SD was never included in the RO. At 10.30 2.7. The RO crossed the state border along the highway from ENSO in the direction of IMATRA with its old composition with the support of the artillery of the 115th SD ... " [318]. The planned

(although not implemented in practice) inclusion of the 115th Rifle Battalion in the reconnaissance detachment, as well as the planned and implemented participation of the 115th Rifle Division artillery is another confirmation that reconnaissance in combat in the direction of Imatra was organized, at least, at the command level of the 23rd Army: the 115th Rifle Division was part of the 19th SC and the commander of the 10th MK (especially the commander of the 21st TD) did not obey in any way.

In the very hours when preparations for reconnaissance in force began on the Soviet side of the border, in the sector of the 2nd Finnish Infantry Division, in the strip from st. Parikkala to Ristalahti (see map no. 13), a similar operation began. The general offensive of the Finnish "Karelian Army" on the Onega-Ladoga Isthmus began only on July 10, 1941. But a few days before the start of full-scale hostilities, the Finnish command decided, apparently, to conduct reconnaissance in battle in the direction of Lahdenpohya. In the future, it was there, at the junction of the 23rd and 7th Soviet armies, that the Finns several times tried to reach the shore of Lake Ladoga, cut the Hiitola-Lahdenpohya-Sortavala railway line and break the supply lines of the 7th Army. Thus, the direction of reconnaissance in combat, undertaken by the Finns in the first days of July, was quite expedient. In the sources known to the author, unfortunately, no data was found

on what kind of forces this reconnaissance in force was carried out. Strictly speaking, the hostilities of July 1-7 in the Esko-Meriya-Ristalahti region are not mentioned at all in any survey work on the history of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War. All authors (both Soviet and Western) unanimously and without agreement begin the description of the events of the war on July 10, 1941. Most likely, reconnaissance in battle was carried out only by part of the forces of the 2nd Infantry Division. In the documents of the headquarters of the Red Army, there are very different estimates of the size of the enemy: *"On 1.7.41, the enemy, with a force of up to **2 infantry brigades** (6th and 7th), went on the offensive, directing the main attack on Meria in the sector of the 461st joint venture (right-flank regiment 142nd SD). By the end of the day took Esco... During the day 2.7. the enemy, with **at least 4 infantry regiments** (which roughly corresponds to two brigades. - M.S.), continued the offensive. By the end of the day, Meria took possession. The enemy attacks on Ristalahti were not successful..."* [319]. This is an entry in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army. In the combat order of the headquarters of the 24th TD No. 5 dated 5.50 on July 2, we read: *"The enemy, with a force of up to two infantry divisions, during the day and night of 1.07, pressed our advanced units on the Ristalahti-Porikalla front ..." [320].*

The 24th Panzer Division was on the opposite (left) flank of the front of the 23rd Army and information about the enemy grouping operating in the Esko-Ristalahti area could only be obtained from higher headquarters (although in this case it is not clear how the two brigades turned into two divisions). In contrast, the 198th motorized division of the 10th mechanized corps was (as will be shown below) transferred to the Elisenvaara region and took a direct part in the battles at Esko-Meria. In the documents of the headquarters of the 198th ml, the established number of the enemy is steadily decreasing: - Combat order No. 08 (23.00 3.7) *"The*

*enemy pressed the 461st Rifle Regiment and captured one battalion area, suffering huge losses ... "*

- Opersvodka No. 7 (8.00 5.7) *"An enemy **infantry brigade** is operating in front of the division ..." - Opersvodka*

No. 8 (24.00 5.7) *"Up to 3 **Finnish battalions**, presumably the 7th infantry brigade , are defending in front of the division's front ..." An interesting*

*assessment of the number and plans of the enemy is found in the latest (2006) work of a Russian historian: "...on June 29, the first*

*manifestations of activity of the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus were noted, and on the night of July 1, **up to two infantry battalions** with tanks wedged into our defensive formations at the junction of the 19th and 50th Infantry*

*corps in the Lakhdenpokhya region, with the task of breaking through to the western coast of Lake Ladoga, isolating the 7th and 23rd armies from each other **and subsequently destroying them piece by piece ...** " [312].*

The problem is not even that the "junction of the 19th and 50th rifle corps" is assigned to the "Lakhdenpokhya region" - this can be considered an unfortunate reservation - but in the amazing assessment of the combat potential of the "hot Finnish guys", who, with the help of two infantry battalions were going to "destroy in parts" two Soviet armies! All this would be funny - if in July 1941 the command of the 23rd Army did not appreciate what was happening in almost the same way. A local sortie of the Finns on the right flank of the army caused a great commotion at

its headquarters. In the ZhBD of the 23rd Army we read: *"To eliminate the breakthrough and restore the situation in the sector of the 461st Rifle Regiment, the commander decided to use the 10th MK ..."* This decision was fully consistent with all pre-war plans and Charters - the mechanized corps in the defense was supposed to be used to deliver a devastating blow to the enemy who broke through into the depths of the battle order of the army. Usually this was formulated as follows: "to surround, destroy and prevent a retreat back to enemy territory with a blow to the flank and rear." However, the command of the 23rd Army decided to "use the 10th MK" in its previous way - continuing to "disassemble" the mechanized corps in parts. The 198th motorized

division was completely withdrawn from the subordination of the command of the mechanized corps and received an order *"by the end of 2.7, concentrate along the railway in the Antola-Sairola area in readiness for action in the direction of the 142nd rifle division and the 115th rifle division."* Moreover, this decision was made at night, in extreme fever and haste, "over the head" of the commander of the 10th MK. The commander of the 198th MD only had to inform his immediate superior: *"Based on the instructions of the chief of staff of the 23rd Army, the division passes under his control and from 8.00 2.7 moves forward to the Sayrala-Elisenvaara region"* (Combat report No. 02 dated 4.30 July 2) .

Then, on the night of July 2-3, it was the turn to "dismantle" the main strike force of the 10th mechanized corps, the 21st tank division. In the railway division of the division, this is described as follows: *"at 23.30 2.7, the head of the ABTU of the 23rd army (head of the armored department of the 23rd army), Major General Lavrinovich, arrived at the staff and, on behalf of the Commander, set the following task for the division: one TP consisting of 50 tanks of linear and Load 16 flamethrowers with 2 ammunition sets, 2 gas stations and 2 daily food rations at st. KHINIL and direct railway. to the ELISENVAARA area at the disposal of the commander of the 198th md. Finish loading by 24.00 2.7 / in time is clearly unrealistic / ... Such a task was completely unrealistic in time, however, the 41st TP, consisting of 41 tanks with 2 tanks and 2 refueling, by 1.00 3.7 was loaded onto 50 platforms and at 1.15 3.7 the echelon set off for ELISANVAARA..."*

So, taking into account the tank platoons and tank companies previously transferred to the rifle units of the 23rd Army, the 21st Tank Division has already "lost" 95 tanks and 10 BA-10 heavy cannon armored vehicles. At the same time, the task of capturing the Imatra station was not removed at all! On the same night from July 2 to July 3, Major General Lavrinovich, who arrived at the headquarters of the 21st TD, ordered: *"The rest of the division should be concentrated on its own by 4.00 3.7 in the ENSO area and from 6.00 3.7. launch an attack on IMATRA with the task of capturing IMATRA and the isthmuses between the lakes IMALAN-YARVI, SAIMA, holding the latter until the infantry units approach"* [318].

As for the third division of the 10th mechanized corps, the 24th tank division, it was practically inactive. In the morning (at 5.50) on July 2, the division received an order *to "concentrate by 8.00 in the area of st. Tali."* With some delay (judging by the combat report of the headquarters of division No. 6 - by 13.00 on July 2), the 24th TD went to the area of the Tali railway station, i.e. moved about 10-15 km from the previous place of concentration, still being outside the combat zone [321]. As a result, the main task of the 10th mechanized corps - the capture of the Imatra railway station and the narrow isthmus adjacent to it between the state border and the Saimaa lake system, had to be solved by the forces of the 21st tank division alone, and this division had not yet fired a single shot at the enemy, "lost" almost half of its tanks. On the other hand, for the sake of objectivity, it must be admitted that the 21st Panzer was not required to repeat the "Suvorov crossing the Alps": from the border Enso to Imatra there were only 8 (!) Km, and the forces of the parties on the front of the upcoming offensive (12th and the 18th Finnish infantry divisions on the one hand, the 43rd and 115th rifle divisions of the Red Army on the other) were approximately equal. As noted above, the first attempt to capture Art. Imatra took place on the morning of July 2. A reconnaissance detachment consisting of a tank company (10 T-26 tanks)

from the reconnaissance battalion of the division, one platoon of flamethrower tanks (3 OT-26 tanks) from the 42nd TP and one motorized rifle company from the 21st MRR at 2.20 crossed over the bridge to the north Art. Antrea across the Vuoksi River, at 7.30 concentrated in the Enso area and at 10.30 crossed the border. The description of further events in different documents does not quite match. In the ZhBD of the 21st Panzer Division we read: *"The results of combat reconnaissance. RO with a fight advanced deep into Finnish territory by 3-4 km and reached the northern slopes of heights. 107.5, which is south of IMATRA. Throughout this stretch, the enemy offered almost no resistance. At the height On 107.5, the enemy met the RO with fire, 1 tank was hit by a heavy machine gun and Lieutenant Litvin was killed, the turret gunner was wounded. A captured Finnish soldier was*

*captured, valuable documents were taken from a killed German officer (???). Observation of RO found that high. 107.5 is well defended by the enemy, there are field facilities / obviously, bunkers.*

CONCLUSION: RO did not fully fulfill its task, did not reach IMATRA, did not set fire to the enemy forest, only established that this **area was defended by insignificant enemy forces** (emphasized by me. - M.S.).

The operational summary of the headquarters of the 21st TD, compiled immediately after the battle (23.00 on July 2), contains the following information: *"Losses of the reconnaissance group: 2 killed, 7 wounded. There are no material losses. One captured Finn was captured"* [323]. The

operational report of the headquarters of the 42nd TP (without a number, dated 21.00 on July 2) refutes the overly self-critical entry in the division's railroad records. It turns out that the platoon of flamethrower tanks of the regiment managed to set fire to a lot of things: *"The platoon, together with the reconnaissance group, reached Yakal, set fire to the village and, moving back along the route to the state border, set fire to the forest"* [324].

In any case, with or without the village burned, the task of capturing the Imatra station on July 2 was not solved. The next attempt, involving much larger forces, took place on 3 July.

In accordance with the order of the commander of the 21st Panzer Division, Colonel L.V. Bunin, three shock groups were formed. The first (one tank and one motorized rifle battalion) was supposed to *"go to the northeastern outskirts of Imatra and cut off the enemy's retreat to the north."* The second (two tank companies and a motorized rifle battalion) was to advance along the railway directly to Yakola-Imatra. The third group (10 tanks and one motorized rifle company) was to advance along the western bank of the Vuoksi River with the task of *"cutting off the enemy's retreat to the west, while simultaneously ensuring the division's operations from the west."* In the reserve of the division commander, in the area of the state border near Enso, there were one more tank and one motorized rifle battalion. The neighbor on the right, the 115th rifle division, was supposed to support the offensive of the tank division with the fire of four artillery battalions [318]. Further events of the day of July 3 are described in the ZhBD of the 21st Panzer Division and in

combat report of the headquarters of the 10th MK dated 17.10 July 4 as follows [318, 325]:

*"By 12.00, the units took their starting position for the offensive. Artillery was delayed in preparation and started it only at 13.00, having fired 50-55 shells in an hour.* Here, apparently, a little military arithmetic reference is needed. The most widespread type of armament of an artillery regiment of a rifle division is a 122 mm howitzer. The combat rate of fire of this weapon indicated in all reference books is 5-6

rounds per minute. In addition, there is such a clearly regulated standard as "Ammunition consumption for a day of intense combat." For a 122-mm howitzer, this consumption was determined by pre-war standards at 88 shots [326]. Two artillery battalions (24

howitzers) could and should have thrown 2,000 shells on the enemy's head within half an hour. 55 shells in an hour is a slow "disturbing fire" (there is such a term in artillery) of a single gun. Such a "fire tornado" could only warn the Finns about the start of the offensive.

*"At 14.00 on 3.7 the motorized rifle regiment and tanks crossed the state border and launched an offensive. With the crossing of the state border, the enemy at first offered weak resistance, and our units quickly moved forward. By 18.00, advanced companies reached the line of the northern slopes of high. 107.5-Yakola (i.e. within 4 hours they "quickly advanced" 4-5 km; people can crawl at such a speed, but tanks cannot move at such a speed in principle - there was no T-26 in the gearbox a special demultiplier for movement at ultra-low speed), where they were met by organized enemy fire and retreated somewhat back. By 22.00 the situation had stabilized at the turn: the forest path southeast of the high. 107.5, two houses sowing. YAKOLA, h. 39.5.*

*The 4th company of the 2nd battalion of the motorized rifle regiment (this is the group that, moving along the western coast of the Vuoksi, was supposed to "cut off the enemy's retreat to the west") met strong enemy resistance, which went on the attack, and by 22.00 the company withdrew with a fight abroad, losing three tanks burnt out and one shot down.*

*At 19.00 (this is the time indicated in the combat report of the headquarters of the 10th MK dated 17.00 4.7), the division commander decided to withdraw from the battle ... (... in the previous combat report of the headquarters of the 10th MK (dated 22.00 3.7) it was said that the decision to suspend*



offensive was accepted by the commander of the 10th MK Lazarev, who was at the command post of the division near the northern outskirts of ENSO) [327]. At

*2.25 on July 4, Colonel Zaev, Chief of Staff of the 10th MK, arrived at the command post of the stadiva with the order of Commander-23. which indicated that the divisions would withdraw from the battle and concentrate in the YASKI area (a village 15 km southeast of the*

*border). At 2.30 the enemy, having secretly bypassed the flags of our units, launched a counteroffensive throughout the division's sector. The counter-offensive began with strong machine-gun fire supported by mortars and artillery. In such an environment, the division commander boldly (as in the text of the ZhBD) decides to withdraw from the battle. By 04:00, the units withdrew from the battle in an organized manner. The*

*enemy went on the attack three times, but was always defeated and driven back with heavy losses. All attempts by the enemy to encircle our units (i.e. surround two tank battalions with infantry) were unsuccessful. By 1100 July 4, the division concentrated in the Jaski area. The dead and wounded were taken out. According*

*to preliminary estimates, there are 127 wounded, incl. 11 command personnel. The number of those killed is being specified. The wrecked tanks were evacuated from the battlefield, except for three that burned down from enemy fire. As a result of the battle, at least 150 White Finns were killed and more than a hundred people were wounded. The number of those killed was clarified the next day. In the operational summary*

headquarters of the 10th MK (No. 22 of 2.00 July 5) the following figures are given [328]:

- the tank regiment lost 8 people killed, 4 wounded, 1 missing; - in the motorized rifle regiment 45 killed, 90 wounded, 10 missing. In addition, *"destroyed by enemy artillery and mortars"* 10 hand machine guns and 35 rifles [318].

On July 4, 1941, the 24th Panzer Division of the 10th Mechanized Corps took part in the battles with the "White Finns" for the first, only and last time. But not the whole division, and not even one of its regiments, but **two platoons** from the tank battalion, transferred on June 30 to reinforce the 123rd rifle division. 6 BT tanks under the command of Lieutenant Radchenko, together with the 1st battalion of the 255th rifle regiment, conducted reconnaissance in combat in Finland, near the village of Vilmva. *"The battle lasted for 2 hours, as a result of the battle, an anti-tank gun and two enemy machine guns were destroyed. Own losses: 2 tanks were knocked out, of which one required medium repairs, the other was restored by the crew, a driver mechanic was wounded in the personnel "[ 312].* For what purpose this reconnaissance in force was carried out, and whether it was somehow connected with building bridges on the forest stream Tervajoki, it will no

longer be possible to find out from the documents of the division headquarters and the 10th mechanized corps. While the formations of the 10th MK were carrying out all these strange maneuvers, at a time when they were desperately trying to pass 170 km through their own territory, at a time when two regiments of the 21st Panzer Division, under the personal leadership of the corps commander, clumsily poked in defense of "insignificant enemy forces" at the turn of the "forest path and two houses" near the obscure village of Yakola, at a time when an absurd paramilitary farce was being played out on the Karelian Isthmus, an unprecedented military catastrophe.

During the first 10 days of the war, the troops of the North-Western Front (Baltic OVO) were utterly defeated. German troops occupied all of Lithuania, most of Latvia, crossed the Daugava (Western Dvina) on the front from Riga to Daugavpils and, almost without meeting organized resistance, advanced to Ostrov and Pskov (see map No. 8). As for the front headquarters, on June 27 it "relocated" to Rezekne, on June 30 to Pskov and on July 5 to Novgorod. The pace of the disorderly retreat of the troops of the North-Western Front in the first days was so high that the German command perceived what was happening as a pre-planned withdrawal. On June 23, 1941, the Chief of Staff of the German Ground Forces F. Halder writes in his famous "War Diary": *"... it seems that there is no need to talk about organized withdrawal. The exception is, perhaps, the area in front of the front of Army Group North, where, apparently, a withdrawal beyond the Western Dvina River was indeed planned and prepared in advance. The reasons for such preparation cannot yet be established..."* [331].

The six so-called "national divisions" that were part of the front (created on the basis of the formations of the former armies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 179th sd, 180th sd, 181st sd, 182nd sd, 183rd sd, 184- I sd) either fled, killing their command staff, or were hastily and with large "losses" due to mass desertion withdrawn deep into Russia. In Lithuania and Latvia, in fact, armed uprisings of local nationalists began, which proclaimed the creation of "Provisional Governments" (June 23 in Kaunas and June 28 in Riga) [332]. On June 26, 1941, in the Daugavpils region, the head of the Operational Directorate of the headquarters, S.Z.f., surrendered. Major General Trukhin (later Trukhin actively collaborated with the Germans, headed the headquarters of the Vlasov army and ended his life on the gallows on August 1, 1946). Chief of Staff of the Front, Lieutenant-General P.S. Klenov was arrested at the beginning of July 1941 and shot in October 1941.

On July 3–4, 1941, the head of the operational department of the General Staff of the Red Army, Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin, sent to the North-Western Front as a plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters and acting chief of staff of the front, reported to Zhukov a complete list of units and formations of the front that he could find. From the multi-page reports, a picture of an unprecedented defeat emerges: *"... in the 11th Army (16th Rifle Corps, 29th Rifle Corps, 179th and 184th Rifle Divisions, 5, 33, 128, 188, 126, 23- I rifle divisions, 84th motorized division, 2nd tank division, 5th tank division, 10th artillery brigade, 429th howitzer artillery regiment, 4th and 30th pontoon regiments) - no information ... condition units of the 8th Army are characterized*

*by the following data: 10th Infantry Division: The 98th Infantry Regiment is almost completely destroyed; from the 204th Infantry Regiment, 30 people remained without materiel; The 30th Artillery Regiment has one gun; The 140th howitzer artillery regiment of 36 guns lost 21. The units and command and control of the 90th rifle division have not yet been found. Data on the state of the rest of the army has not been received..."* [333]. According to a statistical compilation

compiled by modern Russian military historians, the troops of the North-Western Front (taking into account the new formations that entered the front) from June 22 to July 9, 1941 lost 2523 tanks and 3560 guns and mortars, 341 thousand small **arms** [9]. It began to fight

practically nothing. On July 5, 1941, signed by Vatutin, the "Instruction for Combating Enemy Tanks" was issued, in which it was prescribed to *"prepare mud-clay, which is thrown into the viewing slots of the tank"* [333]. The troops of the district had to throw mud and clay, which just two weeks ago had 3319 field guns (of all calibers) and 582 anti-aircraft guns in their arsenal [326].

However, the High Command of the Red Army no longer harbored any illusions that the scattered remnants of the practically uncontrollable North-Western Front would be able to hold back the advance of the German troops. The headquarters of the Civil Code, in an effort to somehow slow down the advance of the enemy on the natural defensive lines of the Western Dvina and Velikaya rivers, feverishly threw more and more formations into battle. On June 25, for a counterattack on Manstein's tank corps, which had broken through to Daugavpils, the understaffed 21st mechanized corps of the Moscow Military District was involved (the planned completion date for the formation of this corps was set for 1942) and even the 5th airborne (!) Corps, which did not have for the fight against tanks, neither the appropriate weapons, nor proper training.

Then came the turn of the units and formations of the Northern Front and the aviation of the Baltic Fleet. On June 30, all three bomber regiments of the KBF Air Force (1st MTAP, 57th BAP, 73rd BAP) received an order to bomb bridges and crossings on the Daugava in the area of Jekabpils and Daugavpils. If the enemy by that time had already managed to relocate his fighter air groups to the former Soviet airfields in the Baltic states (according to the legend generally accepted in Russian historiography, these airfields had already been destroyed, bombed, burned and rendered completely unusable), then the fighter regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet remained in their former places of deployment, mainly at the Leningrad airfield hub. As for the fighter aircraft of the S.-Z.f. (more than 400 crews and 500 serviceable aircraft, including 139 of the latest MiG-3s as of June 22, 1941), then by June 30 it no longer existed as an organized and combat-ready unit 126

As a result, the airstrike on crossings on the Daugava on June 30, 1941 was organized in the same way as the attack on Finnish targets on June 25: without fighter cover and in small groups (from 5 to 9 bombers). As a result, not a single bridge was even damaged, and out of 99 bombers that took part in the operation, only 60 returned to their airfields. German fighters shot down 34 aircraft, 5 made an emergency landing. 77 aircrew members were killed or missing [271]. On the evening of July 2 (from 21.30 to 22.00), the 2nd Air

Division of the Air Force of the Northern Front tried to inflict a massive attack on German motorized mechanized columns in the Daugavpils-Kraslava-Rezekne area. The bombers of the 44th BAP carried out 38 sorties, the 58th BAP made 20 sorties. In operational report No. 019 of the headquarters of the 2nd SAD and operational report No. 15 of the headquarters of the 44th BAP, this raid is described as follows: *"... 14 SB aircraft of the 58th BAP were dropped from a height of 200 m along the mechanized columns 73 FAB-100 and 12 ZAB- 50 ... 21 aircraft of the 44th BAP bombed columns of tanks and vehicles, the results of the bombing were excellent, gaps were observed in the thick of the accumulation of tanks ... 16 crews returned to their airfields with bombs without completing the task due to bad weather conditions and not finding targets; 2 crews dropped bombs on timing due to clouds; 2 crews did not return from the mission - lagged behind in the target area due to bad weather conditions; crew st. lieutenant M. dr*

*near Pskov (?), two planes were shot down by their anti-aircraft artillery near Pskov ... "* [334, 335].

On July 4, in the period from 9.50 to 22.00, bombers of the 41st BAD made 42 sorties in the Daugavpils-Rezekne area. Losses - 20 aircraft. 20 out of 42. On July 6, in the period from 17.00 to 23.00, *"44 sorties were made in the Dvina direction. 20 aircraft did not return to base..."* [336]. Manstein,

whose 56th Panzer Corps was the first to cross the Western Dvina, writes in his memoirs: *"In these days, Soviet aviation made every effort to destroy the bridges that fell into our hands with air raids. With amazing tenacity, at low altitude, one squadron flew after another with the only result - they were shot down.*

In the final "Report on the combat operations of the 2nd AD for two months of the war", signed by the division commander, Colonel Arkhangelsky, we read: *"... erroneous and made it possible to destroy us piece by piece. Large targets in the form of large motorized columns followed almost the parade formation (Dvinsk, Ostrov) and required massive air action. And for this there were forces and means.*

*It is characteristic to note that everything that we were taught at the academy and in the field exercises (and they were taught not always too badly) was trampled down from the first days of the war and replaced by*

*sheer improvisation"* [337]. Indeed, there was a direct directive. And the highest level. On July 4, 1941, signed by Zhukov, a directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (b / n) was issued with

the following content:

*"The Headquarters ordered: 1. Departure for bombing objects and troops in large groups categorically forbid. 2.*

*Henceforth, sorties for bombing on one target at the same time produce no more than a link, in extreme cases, a squadron"* [338]. For

hundreds of bomber crews, these few lines were a death sentence. After the fighter aviation regiments deployed in the first echelon of the fronts were crushed and crushed by a wave of panic "relocation", the possibility of organizing escort of bombers by fighters was reduced to a minimum. Chaos and the collapse of the control system of the Air Force, and indeed of the entire Red Army as a whole, reduced this minimum to zero. If in such a situation the pilots had any chance to complete the combat mission and survive at the same time, then this chance was only in massing forces, in building dense battle formations of large groups of bombers, which, at least in theory, could meet the attacking Messerschmitts with a wall powerful machine gun fire. The Directive of the Headquarters did not leave the flight (3 aircraft) of the SB or DB with practically no hope of returning home after meeting with enemy fighters ..

For the sake of truth, it must be admitted that the aviation of that era - even with its most ideal use - was unable to independently solve the problem of destroying enemy tank columns. Fire from the sky could only to a greater or lesser extent help the ground troops, who had to stop the enemy advance by a stubborn defense. Therefore, simultaneously with the switching of actions of the Air Force of the Northern

front from the "Finnish" to the "German" front, the Headquarters began to transfer towards the motorized formations of the 4th Tank Group of the Wehrmacht and the land units of the Northern Front advancing on Rezekne-Ostrov. The formations of the 1st MK were the

first to be transferred to the southwest. Recall that on June 22-24, the mechanized corps, having traveled 200 km along the route Pskov-Luga-Gatchina, concentrated in the southern suburbs of Leningrad. On June 30, 1941, by order of the Headquarters of the Civil Code, by combat order No. 19 of the headquarters of the Northern Front, the 1st mechanized corps was reassigned to the commander of the North-Western Front [339]. On July 1, already by order of the command of the North-Western Front, the 163rd motorized division was withdrawn from the 1st MK. The division was transferred to the operational subordination of the commander of the 27th Army of the North-Western Front and received the task of forced march to concentrate in the Karsava-Rezekne area (see map No. 8). The tank regiment of the division (25th TP), which had 229 T-26 light tanks before the war, received a company of the latest heavy KV tanks before being sent to the North-Western Front, but due to the untimely supply of rolling stock, "the first echelons of the 25th tank regiment began to arrive at the station. *Rezhitsa (Rezekiye) only on July 3, 1941, by 11 o'clock, consisting of up to about one and a half battalions. The rest of the echelons along the way were repeatedly bombarded from the air and ground shelling of the enemy, and until July 3, their arrival in the 163rd motorized division was not established*" [342]. Be that as it may, at 5.00 on July 3, the commander of the 163rd MD, Major General Kuznetsov, gives combat order No. 5: "By 7.00, the 3.7 division without 25 TP and 3/365 ap (3rd division of the artillery regiment) occupies the starting position for the offensive to Dvinsk. The

offensive should begin at 9.00 on 3.7... Do not allow excessive nervousness and panic in your ranks, as well as indiscriminate firing at aircraft..." [340]. How the division commander looked into the water, warning about the inadmissibility of "excessive nervousness and panic." The 163rd MD fought for only two days. In the archives of the division, a half of a sheet from a student's notebook "in a box" is kept, on which the following order is written in pencil:

*"To the commander of the 163rd md. By the end of 5.7.41, the division should be assembled in the area north of OPOCHKA, put in order and prepare defenses along the right bank of the river. Velikaya in the OPOCHKA-*

*Goryachevo region"* [341]. The order was signed by the commander of the 27th Army, General Berzarin - the future military commandant of Berlin ...

One of the elements of "bringing in order" was the appointment of a new command staff. In accordance with the order (n / n) dated July 6, Captain Bushuev was appointed acting commander of the 759th SME, acting. chief of staff of the regiment - lieutenant Sukhov, acting. Commander of the 529th SME - Captain Gagin, acting Chief of Staff of the regiment - Lieutenant Gorelik [343]. The appointment of captains and even lieutenants (!) to such positions exhaustively describes the state in which the division was. Already two weeks after the defeat, on July 17 at 10.00, the chief of staff of the 163rd MD Colonel Bogdanovich signed operational summary No. 31: "The division has no direct contact with the enemy ... - not Rezhitsa (Rezekne) after fierce fighting on July 3-4 ... Availability of materiel:

- 335 anti-aircraft artillery division - without m / h. - 364
- artillery regiment - two guns (out of 36 according to the staffing table. - M.S.);
- 205 anti-tank division - three guns (out of 18 according to the staffing table. - M.S.). - 177

*reconnaissance battalions - without equipment*

" [344]. Nevertheless, the division delayed the advance of the Germans for several days. About This can be judged at least by the following passage from Manstein's memoirs:

*"... The 56th Panzer Corps turned sharply to the east, to Sebezh-Opochka ... Unfortunately, our fears about the swampy terrain were justified. True, the 8th Panzer Division found a path leading through the swamps. But it was **packed with vehicles of the Soviet motorized division, which remained here** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). It took days to clear the road and restore the destroyed bridges..." [182].* The main forces of the 1st mechanized corps were concentrated in

the area of the city of Porkhov (70 km east of Pskov), i.e. in fact, the corps returned to the area of its pre-war deployment. After sending the 1st Panzer Division to the Arctic, and the 163rd Motorized Division to Rezekne, the "main forces" of the corps were reduced to one (3rd) Panzer Division and a separate corps motorcycle regiment (moreover, the anti-aircraft artillery battalion of the 3rd TD had another 28 June was withdrawn from the division and "sent to Leningrad to carry out a special task") [361]. Further - less. "On July 4, on the basis of a personal order of the Chief of Staff of the North-Western Front, a

*motorized rifle regiment with a motorcycle company was taken from the 3rd Panzer Division from the 5th Motorcycle Regiment, which was assigned a separate task ..." [342].* Thus, the mechanized corps (already reduced to the size of one tank division) was left almost without its own infantry. In such situations, the possibility of conducting successful military operations depended on the organization of close cooperation with the infantry of neighboring rifle formations.

Theoretically, there was infantry. The 41st Rifle Corps (118th Rifle Division, 111th Division, 235th Division, 90th SD). By July 4, two divisions of the 41st SC (118th and 111th) had already arrived in the indicated deployment areas. On this day, July 4, 1941, the 1st Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, practically without a fight, occupied the city of Ostrov. In the hands of the enemy were two (road and rail) unexploded bridges across the river. Great. Having captured Ostrov and the bridges across the Velikaya, the German tank formations went to the "finish line" for a breakthrough on Leningrad. At 2 am on July 5, 1941, the headquarters of the North-Western Front issued a very short combat order No. 14: "First. As a result of the battle on July 4, 1941, the enemy captured the Island. Second. With the dawn, the joint actions of the 111th Rifle Division and the 3rd Panzer Division, with the support of aviation, destroy the enemy in the Ostrov area, capture Ostrov and the 111th Rifle Division completely occupy its defense line". Judging by the report of the commander of the 1st MK, Major General M.L. Chernavsky, the battle for the city of Ostrov developed as follows: "... The attack began at 15.25. As a result of the battle with enemy tanks and artillery, the 5th tank regiment of the 3rd tank division

*units on the left bank of the river. The Great took possession of the mountains. Island, but without artillery and air support (only the 3rd howitzer artillery regiment in the amount of 24 guns participated in the battle, and aviation did not take part), in this battle the division suffered heavy losses in materiel and personnel from enemy anti-tank and artillery fire composition. There was no infantry to secure the occupied line and clear the city from the enemy (there were up to one and a half battalions of the 111th Infantry Division of the 41st SC, and the rest of the infantry randomly retreated). ... On July 5, at 15.55 minutes (that is, half an hour after the start of the attack. - M.S.), the enemy, with strong artillery and air support,*

*launched a counterattack. The 3rd Panzer Division, having not received reinforcements (and especially infantry), stubbornly held back the attack until 17:00, but under the attack of dive bombers that used incendiary bombs and a combustible mixture, powerful artillery and mortars, suffering heavy losses, at 19:00 began to withdraw 5th tank regiment along the highway to Porkhov, and the 6th tank regiment in a northerly direction ... " [345].*

By the end of the day, the remnants of the tank regiments of the division retreated along diverging directions 50–60 km from the Island.

The command of the North-Western Front gave a slightly different assessment of what happened near the Island. On July 6, the commander of the 1st MK was sent the following combat order: "1. You did not take measures to

*establish cooperation with the infantry and misled the Military Council that there was no infantry, while it was in the area of operations, the headquarters of the 41st Rifle Corps and the 111th Rifle Division were also there.*

*2. Despite the huge losses of the Germans near the Island, you did not show perseverance and without reason began to retreat and with your reports about the breakthrough of the Germans misled the Military Council of the front ...*

*I draw your attention to unworthy behavior and order: to stop the retreat and take part in a general counterattack on the Island with the aim of finally defeating the Germans ... Report the execution to me by 22.00 6.7 "[ 333].*

There was no one and nothing to fulfill. According to the report of the corps commander, "in the 3rd Panzer Division, in the 5th Panzer Regiment - 1 T-28 tank and 14 BT-7 tanks; in the 6th tank regiment - 2 KV tanks, 26 BT-7 tanks. 43 tanks in total.

At the beginning of June 1941, the 3rd TD had 337 tanks (T-28 - 40, KV-2, BT-7 - 16). By June 30, 1941, after the march from Porkhov to Leningrad, 278 tanks (26 T-28, 60 T-26, 192 BT-7) entered the concentration area [362]. The division entered the disposal of the North-Western Front, having in service (according to various sources) from 200 to 258 tanks (including 10 of the newest heavy KV received from the Kirov plant in Leningrad). By July 15, 1941, 4 T-28, 2 KV and 16 BT-7 tanks remained in the regiments of the 3rd Panzer Division. Only 22 tanks, or 7% of the original number. Huge losses of Soviet tanks in the battle near the city of Ostrov are also confirmed by enemy documents, according to which "the 1st Panzer Division destroyed more than 140 tanks in the bridgehead of Ostrov" [346].

*"On July 6, by combat order No. 020 of the commander of the North-Western Front, the 3rd Panzer Division is subordinate to the commander of the 22nd SC. On July 7, by cipher telegram No. 881 / Sh, deputy. Chief of Staff of the North-Western Front gave the order*

*the commander of the subordination of the 3rd TD to the commander of the 41st SC ... As a result of these resubmissions, the commander of the 22nd SC left the 5th tank regiment, which was located in his area, under his control, and did not return it to the division. The 6th tank regiment was subordinate to the commander of the 41st SC. Thus, from July 7, the 3rd Panzer Division as an independent combat unit ceased to exist ... " [345].*

The meeting battle on July 5 near the city of Ostrov was in fact the last major tank battle of 1941 in the northwestern direction (Baltic-Leningrad). However, in the course of what is called the "Leningrad strategic defensive operation" in Soviet historiography (July 10 - September 30, 1941). The Red Army lost 1492 tanks [9]. Taking into account the above losses in the Baltic defensive operation, the total losses in the northwestern strategic direction **from June 22 to September 30 amounted to 4015 tanks.**

The 4th Tank Group of the Wehrmacht, which operated in this direction, by the beginning of hostilities, had only 563 tanks in its three tank divisions (1d, 6d, 8d) (and another 39 armed only with machine guns "commander tanks"). Three quarters of the entire tank fleet of the 4th TGr (412 out of 563) were light tanks with bulletproof armor, armed with small-caliber (20 mm and 37 mm) guns (Pz-II, Pz 35 (t), Pz-38 (t)). In the 6th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, more than half of all tanks (155 out of 232) were light Czech tanks "Pz-35 (t)" as outdated and worn out as the BT-5 from the 24th Panzer Division scattered on the move 10 th MK. By **September 10, 1941**, the irretrievable losses of the 4th TGr of the Wehrmacht amounted to 121 tanks, and another 71 tanks were considered temporarily out of order. For two and a half months of fighting, the 4th TGr received only 2 tanks to make up for losses, as a result, in early September 1941, the number of combat-ready tanks of the group decreased to 373 units [184].

The 10th mechanized corps was the last to be removed from the Karelian Isthmus and sent towards the advancing German divisions. On July 5, 1941, the headquarters of the 23rd Army and the 10th Mechanized Corps received orders for the immediate transfer of tank formations of the corps to the area of the southern suburbs of Leningrad, i.e. to the place of pre-war deployment of the 10th MK. On the evening of July 5, the first echelons with tanks left the Tali and Yasky stations, by July 7 the 21st and 24th Panzer Divisions concentrated in the Pushkin-Gatchina area. Their fighting on the front of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war ended there. Probably, if all the gasoline spent on the redeployment of two tank divisions from Gatchina to Vyborg and back was simply poured into the adjacent Finnish territory, the effect would be great. At the very least, the forest near the Imatra station would definitely

have been burned to the ground ... Before "giving up" to the neighboring front two tank divisions of the 10th mechanized corps, the commander of the 23rd Army, Lieutenant General Pshennikov, ordered the creation of an army tank group not provided for by any charters, to staff which the 10th mechanized corps was finally dismantled: 54 tanks were taken from the 21st TD, 102 tanks from the 24th TD (albeit mainly outdated BT-2). Contrary to widespread rumors that "there was order in the country under Stalin," the lieutenant general allowed himself to violate the directive of the Headquarters and "stash" a total of half the tanks of the 10th mechanized corps. During the multi-day return march from the Finnish border to the defensive line on the Luga River (more than 250 km), some of the remaining tanks in the corps broke down. As a result, on July 9, it was decided in each of the divisions to bring the remaining 100 serviceable



tanks into one consolidated tank regiment, and distribute the rest of the vehicles among rifle units. In just two weeks, the tank corps actually melted away. Like mist at dawn. And the 198th motorized division never

returned to the 10th mechanized corps. On July 4-6, this division, together with other units (461st and 701st joint ventures from the 142nd rifle division, 708th joint venture from the 115th rifle division, 260th and 462nd joint ventures from the 168th rifle division) unsuccessfully tried to push the 2nd Finnish Infantry Division over the state border line in the Esko-Meria region. In these battles, the 198th MD lost 9 tanks, 61 people were killed, 266 were wounded [329]. Attached to reinforce the troops of the 19th Rifle Corps, the 41st Tank Regiment (from the 21st Tank Division) irretrievably lost 5 tanks, evacuated from the battlefield and restored another 5 tanks. *"In the battle, the chief of staff of the 41st TP, Major Gavrilov, was killed from the explosion of a White Finnish shell. Killed: middle command staff - 1, junior n / s - 5, private - 2 "* [318]. Judging by the entries in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army, the Finns held the Esko area they occupied on July 1-2, and by the end of July 9 they also occupied

Ristalahti [330]. And then came the day of July 10, 1941.

## Chapter 4.2

### Defeat

After the Stalinist leadership did a huge, versatile, multifaceted, months-long work (the culmination of this work was a massive air strike on June 25, 1941) to draw Finland into a new war against the USSR, it began to remove all reserve formations from the Northern Front and hastily transfer them to southwest, towards the advancing German troops. By the end of the first week of June, all units of the front subordination of the Northern Front (1st MK, 10th MK, 70th SD, 191st SD, 177th SD) were transferred to Ostrov, Pskov, Luga. The 237th Rifle Division was withdrawn from the 7th Army, which managed to stay in Karelia for no more than 3-4 days. There is no doubt that the situation on the

southern approaches to Leningrad was catastrophic, and extraordinary measures were required to save Leningrad. On July 9, 1941, practically without a fight, on the shoulders of the panicked 118th and 111th rifle divisions, the Germans occupied Pskov. The defensive line along the Velikaya River (Pskov and Ostrovsky fortified areas) was broken along the entire front. In mid-July 1941, fighting was already going on at the turn of the river. Meadows, i.e. one hundred kilometers from Leningrad (see map No. 8). There were no long-term defensive structures on the southern approaches to Leningrad at all (according to all pre-war plans, the line of the Western Dvina River was considered the maximum possible line of retreat; Pskov and Ostrovsky URs were built even before the Baltic was included in the USSR), and tens of thousands of citizens dug trenches on the last, Luga frontier. In the city, divisions of the "people's militia" were hastily created, recruited for the most part from among the students and teachers of Leningrad universities who had never held weapons in their hands. Poorly armed and almost untrained units were thrown one after another to hold the front along the Luga River.

Of course, in such a situation, the Headquarters of the Civil Code could not but use the troops of the Northern Front as a primary source of reserves to strengthen the defense on the Luga line. However, ignoring the problem is not the way to solve the problem. Rather, on the contrary. Stalin and his comrades created - not for themselves personally, but for the whole country - a big problem on the Finnish border. On July 26, 1941, this "problem" was formalized in the form of a declaration of war by Finland. Another war and another front could not disappear by itself, simply because no one paid attention to them. To resolve the conflict between the USSR and Finland, which had escalated to the level of a warrior, actions were required - as extraordinary as those that were taken to defend Leningrad. Strictly speaking, there were exactly three possible courses of action:

- start (perhaps with the assistance of the new allies of the USSR, i.e. England and USA) peace talks with Finland;
- silently withdraw the troops of the Northern Front to the line of the Karelian UR and the Svir River, i.e. de facto return to Finland (and return with a large "addition") the territories annexed from it, thus shortening the front line and strengthening

the defense capability of troops through the use of natural (Svir) and artificial (Karelian UR) obstacles; - to find and transfer to the Northern

Front additional reserves, allowing to keep the defense along the line of the existing border (borders of 1940). The first two options, judging by the actual events that took place, were not even considered. In fact, some semblance of the third option was implemented - during the summer and autumn of 1941, the Stavka sent seven rifle divisions to the Finnish front (88th rifle division, 272nd rifle division, 313th rifle division, 314th rifle division, 114th rifle division, 265th Rifle Division, 291st Rifle Division), three separate tank brigades (46th TB, 106th TB, 107th TB), 3rd Leningrad People's Militia Division, 3rd Naval Infantry Brigade, two motorized regiment (24th and 9th) of the NKVD troops. In addition, the 186th Rifle Division and Marine Brigade were formed in Murmansk, and the 131st Rifle Regiment was formed in Petrozavodsk. In other words, in the end, **a significantly larger number of troops had to be sent to the Finnish front than was withdrawn from the Northern Front at the beginning of July 1941.** But this happened precisely in the "finally", and it all ended with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops (more precisely, they lost a large part of the heavy weapons of the scattered remnants of the divisions of the Northern Front) to the above-mentioned line of the Karelian fortified area and the Svir River.

The history of the defeat of the troops of the Northern (later Karelian) fronts in July–September 1941 is described in sufficient detail in the military history literature [17, 65, 133, 154, 314, 315, 316, 352, 354]. Since chronologically this topic is beyond the scope of the subject of our study (i.e., the history of the emergence of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War), in this chapter we will confine ourselves to a brief synopsis  
the above sources.

By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the Finnish Armed Forces had significantly strengthened, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The ground forces now had 16 infantry divisions, two jaeger and one armored cavalry brigades. In total, there were 400 in military service, according to other authors - 500 thousand people. Some even give a figure of 600 thousand people, not forgetting to immediately add that this is equal to the size of Napoleon's army that invaded Russia in 1812. Strange, but such figures did not cause a desire to think about the question

- how could an army of such size appear in a country with a population of less than 4 million people? Of course, if by "army" we mean a crowd of peasants armed with pitchforks, axes and clubs, then in Finland it was possible to recruit two "armies" of 600 thousand people each. If we talk about divisions armed, trained and provided with ammunition (and this is the most expensive component of the material support of hostilities) for at least a few months of the war, then the origin of a simple statistical rule will become clear: "a million people - one division." The Soviet Union was an extremely militarized state, so with a population of 200 million, it entered the war with an army and 303 divisions. 17 "estimated divisions" with a population of 3.7 million people is the same as 920 divisions in the Red Army. Even the infinitely rich Soviet Union could not bear such a military burden.

The peacetime army of Finland had a strength of about 36 thousand people. The "Winter War" forced to put under arms literally everyone who was capable of it

keep the gun in hand. By the end of 1940, after the demobilization of most of the military conscription, there were still 109 thousand people in the armed forces. In January 1941, it was decided to increase the strength of the peacetime army to 75 thousand people, of which 15 thousand serve on a professional basis, and 60 thousand are called up for military service. And yet, the above figures (16 divisions and three brigades) are true. The solution to this "miracle" consists of four components. Firstly, the Finnish divisions (even by the

appearance of the personnel, which is visible in any photograph or military newsreel of those years) were more like divisions of the "people's army" of the times of the civil war than professional army personnel formations. Their staffing was made on the basis of territorial paramilitary organizations (the "shutskor" created back in 1918), and almost half of the rank and file received only minimal military training. Secondly, Finland could withstand the burden of maintaining and equipping the army in 17 "estimated divisions" only for a very short time. We can say that the Finnish army had to either win the "blitzkrieg" or die. Thirdly, the armament (especially for artillery) of the Finnish division was noticeably inferior to Soviet or German "standards". Fourthly, even this level of technical equipment became possible only thanks to the large-scale deliveries of weapons from Germany, which began in October 1940.

Now let's translate these general arguments into the language of specific numbers. According to the staffing table for April 1941, the Red Army rifle division had two artillery regiments, armed with 12 152 mm howitzers, 32 122 mm howitzers and 16 76.2 mm guns. Accordingly, to equip 17 such divisions, 204 152 mm howitzers and 544 122 mm howitzers were required. In fact, much more guns are required, since divisions are combined into corps, corps into armies, and corps and army artillery regiments also need to be armed with something. During the "winter war" Finland had almost no artillery of medium and large caliber. Mainly thanks to German supplies, by the summer of 1941, the Finnish army already had 178 artillery systems of 150-155 mm caliber and 278 artillery systems of 105-122 mm caliber. Significantly less than is required to arm the army by world standards, but already much more than it was just a year ago. Another illustrative example is associated with anti-tank artillery. In the first weeks of the "winter

war" the Finnish army was practically unarmed in the face of the huge armored armadas of the Red Army. In July 1941, there were no more "armored armadas" as part of the troops of the Northern Front, and the Finnish army in 1940-1941. received from Germany about 200 German anti-tank 37-mm guns Pak-36 and more than 200 captured French 25-mm guns "Marianne". In addition, about 350 licensed Swedish 37-mm Bofors guns were produced at Finnish factories. By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the Finnish army was already armed with about 900 anti-tank guns, which is an average of more than 50 guns per division - a quite worthy indicator. To combat the new Soviet tanks (T-34 and KV), all these small-caliber guns would be practically useless, but, as you know,

there were almost no new types of tanks in the troops of the Northern Front, and the above-mentioned guns pierced the armor of light tanks BT and T-26 with a guarantee.

Now let's look at the artillery of the Finnish army through the eyes of those who fought with this army. On December 15, 1941, the "Reference on taking into account the experience of the battles of the Patriotic War on the front of the 23rd Army" was signed. In this document we read: "... *The saturation of the Finnish army with artillery, in comparison with the Red Army, is much lower ... A characteristic feature is the absence of a massive use of enemy artillery even in the areas of penetration of our defense. The artillery preparation before the offensive was, as a rule, short (10-30 minutes) with a small number of shells ...* " [353].

By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the formations of the Finnish army were deployed as follows. In the north of

Finland, in the Kuusamo-Suomussalmi zone, there was the 3rd Army Corps (3rd AK) consisting of two infantry divisions (6th and 3rd infantry divisions). This corps was transferred to the operational subordination of the German command. In the area of the city of

Kuhmo, the 14th Infantry Division was deployed, with the task of advancing on the Rebolylenders (see map No. 7). In

Ladoga Karelia, in the strip from Kuolismaa to Lahdenpohja, the "Karelian Army" was deployed under the command of the Chief of the General Staff of the Finnish Army, General Heinrichs. It consisted of two Jaegers and an armored cavalry brigade, united in the group of General Oinonen (group "O"), the 6th AK (5th and 11th infantry division) and 7 AK (7th and 19th infantry division). In the reserve of the Karelian Army there was one Finnish division (1st Infantry Division) and the German 163rd Infantry Division, which arrived in mid-July 1941 (one regiment of which was transferred to the Arctic, to the Kandalaksha direction). There are six divisions and three brigades in total (see map No. 14). On the border of the

Karelian Isthmus, the 2nd AK (2nd front, 15th front, 18th pd) and 4th AK (12th pd, 4th pd, 8th pd).

The 10th infantry division was in reserve (see map No. 13). Total in the sector of the 23rd Army seven Finnish divisions were deployed in this way.

The 17th Infantry Division was initially located in the area north of the Khanko Peninsula, but then was withdrawn to the Mannerheim reserve and sent to Karelia on July 17. After the transfer of all the reserve

formations of the Northern Front to the south, to the defense zone of the North-Western Front, on the Karelian Isthmus and in Ladoga Karelia, only seven rifle divisions of the Red Army remained. Moreover, they were distributed extremely unevenly: five divisions of the 23rd Army (142nd Rifle Division, 115th Rifle Division, 198th Rifle Division, 43rd Rifle Division and 123rd Rifle Division), reinforced by four heavy artillery regiments of the RGK, were located on the Karelian Isthmus, and only two (71 and 168 rifle divisions) divisions of the 7th army were in Ladoga Karelia (see map 14). Such a distribution of forces clearly indicates that the Soviet command had no idea about the real operational plans of the enemy. There were no "Mannerheim's secrets on Stalin's table" at all, and fortune-telling about the possible directions of the main attack of the Finnish army was based, alas, on the myths and incantations of Soviet propaganda. This propaganda for so long and so loudly shouted about the "White Finnish military, which pulls its dirty paws to the city of Lenin," which finally convinced its customers of this. The fact that the Finnish army will start fighting

actions from the liberation of the annexed territories in the Ladoga Karelia, Moscow clearly did not expect.

The fighting of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish warrior clearly falls into three stages: - offensive in Ladoga Karelia (July 1941); - offensive of the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus (August 1941); - the offensive of the Finnish army to the Svir River and Lake Onega (September-October 1941).

**The**

**offensive in Ladoga Karelia** began on July 10, 1941. The plan of the operation was as follows. The main blow was delivered by the 6th AK (two rifle divisions) at the junction of the 168th and 71st rifle divisions of the 7th Army. Advancing along the eastern shore of Lake Janisjarvi, the corps was to reach the shore of Lake Ladoga, and then advance on Olonets and Svir. The commander of the 6th AK Mannerheim appointed a veteran of the civil war (in Finnish right-wing historiography, it is called the "war of liberation" or "war of independence"), the commander of the Finnish volunteers in 1919 and 1921 P. Talvela. In his memoirs, Mannerheim writes: *"Since the time of the liberation war, I have known him as a fearless and strong-willed leader, who even has a certain amount of impudence necessary to launch a counterattack against an enemy that is superior to us in strength"* [22]. This time, the enemy of General Talvel was significantly outnumbered: two divisions of the 6th Corps struck at the defense sector of two regiments (52nd Rifle Regiment and 367th Rifle Regiment) of the 71st "Karelian-Finnish

Two infantry divisions of the 7th AK were to advance on Sortavala, capture this city and the railway station, thus cutting off the 7th Army from communication with the 23rd Army. Jaeger brigades of group "O" (these were units of lightly armed infantry moving on bicycles; in off-road forest conditions they successfully fulfilled the role of tank brigades absent in the Finnish army) were to break into the deep rear of the 7th Army and go out along a huge 120-kilometer arc to the coast of Lake Ladoga, cutting the lines of communication of the Soviet troops.

On the day the offensive began, Mannerheim issued his order No. 3, which later became famous (one might say, "infamous"), Order No. *Finland*

*and East Karelia will not become free. I swore this in the name of the Finnish peasant army, thus trusting the courage of our men and the sacrifice of our women. For twenty-three years, the White Sea and Olonets Karelia have been waiting for the fulfillment of this promise; For a year and a half, Finnish Karelia, depopulated after the valiant Winter*

*War, was waiting for the dawn to rise.*

*Soldiers of the Liberation War, illustrious men of the Winter War, my brave soldiers! A new day is dawning. Karelia joins our marching ranks with its battalions. The freedom of Karelia and the greatness of Finland shine before us in a powerful stream of world-historical events. May Providence, which determines the fate of peoples, help the Finnish army to fully fulfill the promise that I made to the Karelian tribe. Soldiers! This land that you will step on is watered with the blood of our fellow tribesmen and saturated with suffering, it is a holy land. Your*

*victory will liberate Karelia, your deeds will create a great and happy future for Finland" [37].*

The mention of

the White Sea and Olonets Karelia clearly indicates that the goals of the operation went far (in every sense of the word) beyond the return of the territories annexed in March 1940.

Reminding the soldiers of the "war of liberation" and the "peasant army" of 1918, Mannerheim thus defined the war that had begun as a continuation not only of the "winter war" of 1939-1940, but also as the final stage of the civil war that blazed in Karelia in 1919-1921 gg. In 1945-1946, many leaders of Finland would have given dearly for the fact that such an order never existed ... In the first days of the fighting, the offensive of the Finnish troops developed exceptionally successfully. On July 14, the Loimola station was

occupied. On July 16, the 1st Jaeger Brigade of Colonel Lagus in the Pitkyaranta region reached the shore of Lake Ladoga. This meant that both supply lines of the 168th Rifle Division (the railway line Petrozavodsk-Suoyarvi-Sortavala and the road along the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga) were cut. The 71st Rifle Division actually ceased to exist as a single entity. The left-flank 367th Rifle Regiment was pushed back into the defense zone of the 168th Rifle Division, the remnants of the 52nd Rifle Rifle Division were thrown back to Suojärvi, the right-flank 126th Rifle Regiment retreated to a deserted forest area near Kuolismaa, where (as Soviet historians write) "successfully held the defense" until September 1941

Already on July 13, the headquarters of the 7th Army was relocated from Suoyarvi to Pryazha. Absolutely unique "relocation" was carried out by the headquarters of the 71st division. He was "*evacuated (???) along Ladoga to Leningrad, and then by July 20 was transferred by rail to Suoyarvi*" [354]. Meanwhile, Talvel's corps continued its offensive along the shores of Lake Ladoga and on July 22 reached the 1939 border near the village of Vidlitsa. On July 24, the 6th AK reached the line of the Tuuloksa (Tuulosjoki) River, which was the last natural obstacle on the way of Finnish troops to Olonets and the Svir River.

While the 6th AK went over 150 km in two weeks during a continuous offensive, the 7th AK unsuccessfully tried to break through the defenses of the 168th rifle division of Colonel Bondarev at the very border. The steadfastness and courage of the Soviet troops, concrete pillboxes, minefields and 42 km of wire fences in the Sortavala fortified area turned out to be an insurmountable obstacle for the Finnish infantry. For the whole of July 1941, with heavy losses (5.5 thousand people, including 1.5 thousand killed), gnawing through the defenses of Bondarev's division, the Finns advanced 10-15 km to the village of Ruskeala on the Loymola railway line - Sortavala. The Finns failed to capture or surround Sortavala from the west. Since all communication with the units and headquarters of the 7th Army thrown far to the east was lost, on July 21 the Sortavala group of troops (168th Rifle Division and 367th Rifle Division of the 71st Division) was transferred to the 23rd Army.

At that moment, when Talvel's corps reached the line of the Tuloksa River, in fact there were no large forces of the Red Army in front of him. Talvela insisted on the further development of the breakthrough, and after he was denied this, he bitterly spoke (September 2, 1941) to the German General Engelbrecht: *the Svir River and, possibly, create a foothold on its opposite bank*" [65]. Mannerheim, however, looked at the situation differently: "... *Talvela demanded that the troops again go on the offensive from the borders of the Tuulosjoki River, but I, knowing his impulsive*

*character, found it necessary to remark to him that the time was not yet ripe for this. Offensives must not be launched until the supply lines are put in order and additional forces taken from other sectors of the front are concentrated. I didn't want any lightning success...*" [22]. Additional forces (1st Finnish

Infantry Division, 163rd Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht, a little later and the 17th Finnish Infantry Division) were sent on the offensive along the railway line from Loimola to Suoyarvi and further, bypassing the northern bank of Syamozero, to Petrozavodsk .

Meanwhile, the Soviet command, having recovered from the first shock, began to feverishly collect new units and formations. In Petrozavodsk, on the basis of the 31st reserve regiment and with the involvement of the party and Komsomol activists of the city, the 131st rifle regiment was formed. To reinforce the regiment, an armored train that happened to be near Petrozavodsk was attached, and already on July 13, the formation formed in the fire order was sent by rail to Suoyarvi.

Another (along with the party asset) reserve of the 7th Army was the NKVD troops, which were deployed in large numbers in the Soviet "Karelo-Finland", which in the 30s became one of the largest "islands" of the Gulag archipelago. On July 16, two motorized regiments of the NKVD troops (9th and 24th SMEs) were transferred to the operational subordination of the command of the 7th Army. Then the 452nd regiment of the 198th motorized division and the 7th motorcycle regiment (10th mechanized corps), the 3rd Marine Brigade, several separate tank companies and artillery battalions. On July 21, 1941, the Commander-in-Chief of the North-Western Strategic Direction, a member of the Politburo

of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, one of the five members of the State Defense Committee, Marshal K. Voroshilov arrived at the headquarters of the 7th Army, located near the village of Pryazha (by a strange coincidence , it was on this day that Hitler arrived at the headquarters of the commander of Army Group North, Field Marshal Leeb). At the headquarters of the 7th Army on July 21, several important decisions were made. First, Voroshilov ordered the army headquarters to immediately return to Suoyarvi. Secondly, two relatively large operational groups were formed: the Petrozavodsk OG (the 9th and 24th regiments of the NKVD, the 10th reserve joint venture) and the Southern OG (3rd brigade of marines, the 452nd mechanized infantry regiment and the 7th mcp). On the same day, July 21, 1941, at the station lost in the dense forests, the paths of the "First Marshal" and the 1st Panzer

Division of the 1st Mechanized Corps crossed. The attentive reader may still remember that on June 17 this division received an order to load into railway trains and arrive at the Alakurtti polar station. On July 1, 1941, in the area of the city of Salla, the 36th Wehrmacht Corps (169th Infantry Division and the SS motorized brigade "Nord") went on the offensive. During a week of fierce fighting, the tankers of General Baranov, despite the clearly "anti-tank" terrain, successfully counterattacked the enemy and repeatedly turned the SS brigade into a stampede. *"Early on the morning of July 4, the headquarters of the 36th AK witnessed an amazing event: the entire SS division was rapidly rushing on motorcycles towards Rovaniemi, and Russian tanks were chasing it on its heels. For several hours, the corps headquarters, including the chief of staff, stopped the SS men and sent them back to their positions ... some raced 80 km without stopping to Kemijärvi, where they forced the local commandant to blow up the bridge across the river. I*



*who are about to be here...*" [65]. It is noteworthy that in the archives of the 1st Panzer Division there is no mention of the pursuit of the enemy in Finland, which, in our opinion, only confirms the fact that the meeting with Baranov's Panzer Division made an indelible impression on the SS men, under the influence of which they rushed without looking back 80 km ... Much more significant is

another, and this time documented, fact: the 1st tank fought not only successfully, but also with "little bloodshed". The losses of the division in the battles near the city of Salla were relatively small, and even in comparison with the usual losses for the tragic summer of 1941, the losses of hundreds of other divisions of the Red Army were completely miserable. In total, from June 30 to July 7, the division lost 28 people killed, 30 missing, 58 wounded. 33 BT-7 tanks, 2 BA-10 tanks and 1 BA-20 tank were irretrievably lost [355]. In a separate automobile battalion of the division (236 cars and 2 motorcycles) *"there is not a single breakdown or forced stop."* Losses of personnel - 3 soldiers were wounded [356]. The howitzer artillery regiment of the division lost only 8 people from June 22 to August 1 (1 killed, 7 wounded). Tractors (tractors) of the regiment in the amount of 36 units traveled an average of 279 km each, *"the regiment has no losses of equipment and vehicles"* [357]. In general, the amazing history of the 1st Panzer Division can serve as a clear illustration of the paradoxical rule: "The bullet is afraid of the bold, the bayonet does not take the bold." It was in the 1st Tank Battalion of the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division that the crew of the legendary KV No. 864 tank fought under the command of Senior Lieutenant Z. Kolobanov. On August 19, 1941, in the battle on the Luga-Gatchina highway, this crew fought with 40 German tanks. "KV" received 156 direct hits from enemy shells, but remained unharmed. The Germans, as is commonly believed, then lost 22 tanks. The last figure, most likely, is many times overestimated, but the very fact of the successful battle of Kolobanov

At 6 o'clock in the morning on July 15, 1941, after several categorical orders from the Headquarters, units of the 1st TD began loading into trains at the station. Alakurtti - the division, like all other tank formations of the Northern Front, was transferred to the Luga line of defense of Leningrad. True, not the entire division. Commander of the 14th Army, Lieutenant General V.A. Frolov, contrary to all the orders of the Stavka, he "started" the motorized rifle regiment of the division and the 3rd battalion of the 1st tank regiment. On July 17, exactly one month after the "peaceful summer day" the 1st Panzer was raised on combat alert, the echelons moved away from the Alakurtti station. On July 21, Voroshilov stopped the echelons of the division with his power and ordered the 2nd Tank Regiment to be unloaded. In the end, an incomplete, battle-hardened, well-trained tank division arrived at the Luga line, and, in fact, two tank battalions of the 1st

tank regiment, armed with about 80 tanks ... 2nd tank regiment (it arrived in Petrozavodsk, armed with KV - 4; T-28 - 13; BT-7 - 29; BT-5 - 57; T-26 - 32. A total of 135 tanks and 19 armored vehicles BA-10 and BA-20) immediately tore apart into two parts: two tank battalions were transferred to the Petrozavodsk OG and one battalion to the Southern OG. It is difficult to understand the logic of such "operational art". And the point is not even in the already bad tradition of the first weeks and months of the war, the dismemberment of powerful "steel cores" into weak "pellets". Unfortunately, Marshal Voroshilov did not understand that a division of light tanks with bulletproof armor and small-caliber guns was not a magic wand, but a tool. Tool,

fit for a specific job. The same one that in the wars of the last century was carried out by the Cossack horse lava: to drive and cut down the fleeing, to seize headquarters and warehouses, to burn carts in the rear of the enemy paralyzed by fear. And on the terrain with such names as Syamozero, Mashozero, Vedlozero, Kroshnozero, among the dense forests, swamps and lakes of Karelia, a tank regiment could only die heroically. What happened in reality.

On July 23-27, 1941, in the forests near Vedlozero, a fierce and almost the only close battle of tanks and infantry flared up. This time, the courageous tankers of Baranov's division met with an equally staunch and courageous enemy. Colonel Paalu's 1st Finnish Infantry Division, which was put into battle, had the combat experience of the "winter war" (including the experience of fighting Soviet tanks), but at the same time - incomparably better weapons than during the days of the "winter war". Light small-caliber guns of the Finnish army were the best suited for operations from forest ambushes (the French 25-mm anti-tank "Marianne" weighed only 310 kg, 37-mm "Bofors" - 375 kg). Judging by the reports of the command of the Petrozavodsk OG, the motorized "Chekists" retreated after the very first shots, and the Finnish infantry successfully shot the tanks stuck in the swamps. However, the Finns apparently did not have enough guns, so bottles of gasoline and heavy drafts were also used. A few days later, the offensive of the Petrozavodsk OG finally bogged down. The losses of the tank regiment amounted to 67 BT tanks and 279 personnel [366].

The German 163rd Infantry Division turned out to be of little use for fighting in a wooded swampy area and could not complete the task of capturing Suoyarvi on its own. Mannerheim was forced to transfer Jaeger brigades to the left flank of the "Karelian Army" and send the main forces of the 6th AK for an enveloping blow to the flank and rear of the group of Soviet troops near Suoyarvi. After the Finns cut the railway line near the southern bank of the Syamozero, the Soviet troops were forced to move east from Suojärvi. After the completion of this operation, Mannerheim considered it good to again enlist the German division in his reserve and withdraw it from the battle zone.

On July 28, the 3rd Leningrad DNO arrived in Karelia, which was included in the Southern OG. In early August, the 272nd Rifle Division arrived from the Stavka reserve, which was then included in the Petrozavodsk OG. After the arrival of reinforcements, another stage of bloody attempts began to counterattack, supported by tanks, Finnish troops and push them back from Tuloks and Vedlozer to the west. However, in two weeks it was possible to move forward by only 10-15 km. In mid-August, the front in Ladoga Karelia stabilized on a line passing, on average, 30-50 km east of the 1939 border (see Map No. 14). The losses of the "Karelian Army" were very high: in 20 days of July 41st, it lost 6.7 thousand killed and 25 thousand wounded [354].

***The offensive on the Karelian Isthmus began on August 31, 1941.***

Since all the reserves of the high command of the Finnish army were already involved in the battles in the Ladoga Karelia, the offensive was carried out only by those forces that were at the border from the very beginning of the war: three infantry divisions of the 2nd AK,

three infantry divisions of the 4th AK and a separate 10th infantry division (see maps nos. 13 and 15). Contrary to the months-long expectations of the command of the 23rd Army and the Northern Front, the Finns delivered the main blow not in the direction of Lappeenranta-Vyborg, but on the directly opposite flank of the defense of the 23rd Army, near the northern

coast of Lake Ladoga. On the eve of the start of the Finnish offensive (the coincidence, apparently, turned out to be purely accidental), the command of the 23rd Army tried to organize a counterattack along the shore of Lake Ladoga from Lahdenpohja to the northeast in order to push the Finnish troops away from Sortavala. On the day of participation in the counterattack, the 198th division was involved (without the 452nd infantry regiment, which had previously been redeployed to Karelia) and the 181st infantry regiment transferred from the left flank of the army from the 43rd rifle division. From the morning of July 29 until the end of the day on July 31, the shock troupe advanced 3-4 km, and the offensive bogged down on this. The losses turned out to be unreasonably large. So, the 198th MD lost in these battles 168 people killed and 1704 wounded [358]. The absolutely incredible ratio of the number of killed and wounded (1 to 10) is noteworthy. Of course, the fighters and commanders of the 198th MD could not differ in their anatomical structure from all other people (among whom the ratio of killed and wounded in all wars of the 20th century was approximately 1 to 3). They did not differ - in the period July 4 to August 10, the losses of the 198th division amounted to 216 killed, 851

wounded and 583 missing [359]. Most likely, the above figure of 1704 combines the wounded and the "missing". Be that as it may, the failed attempt at a counteroffensive only helped the Finns, as it bled the only reserve of the 19th SC (198th division) and "condensed" the battle formations of the Soviet troops precisely on that sector of the front that the Finnish command was going to surround. On July 31, 1941, after a short artillery preparation, the 2nd Infantry Division launched an attack on Lakhdenpohja, and the 15th Infantry Division on Hiitola. In contrast to the situation in Ladoga Karelia, where the Finns launched an offensive on July 10, having a three-fold numerical superiority, in the battle near the northern coast of Ladoga, the forces of the parties were

approximately equal. The first days of August passed there in fierce, bloody battles. *"Although during these fierce battles," Mannerheim writes in his memoirs, "which I personally watched close, I was repeatedly asked to throw in fresh forces, I kept this reserve (10th Infantry Division) and only on August 4 transferred his corps commander, ordering him to be used in full only in the direction indicated by me. The next day, a fresh division under the command of Colonel Sikhvo went on the offensive, dragging neighboring units with it, and on August 7 captured the village of Kaukola. The deep break was successfully completed on 8 August. The troops reached the shore of Lake Ladoga in the Lakhdenpohja region, which meant that the communications of the Sortavala group of enemy troops were completely cut. On August 11, an important junction of railways and highways, Hiitola, fell, and*

*the wedge of the offensive reached the shore of Ladoga between Hiitola and Kexholm.* Already on August 4, on the fifth day of the Finnish offensive, Lieutenant General Pshennikov was removed from the post of commander of the 23rd Army, he was replaced by M

On July 5, the commander of the Northern Front ordered Gerasimov to immediately withdraw the entire Sortavala grouping to the south-west, to Kexholm, but on August 6, Voroshilov canceled this order with his authority, ordering "to hold *Sortavala at all costs*" [360]. To eliminate the Finnish breakthrough at Hiitol, the 23rd Army was transferred to the 265th Rifle Division, which the Headquarters had previously sent to Gatchina, i.e. to the German front.

The 265th SD was formed in the Moscow Military District, and *"up to 40% of the personnel who entered the formation of the division had previously served or worked in the NKVD system"* [354]. On August 10, the command of the 23rd Army tried to carry out a counterattack with the forces of the 265th Rifle Division and the 115th Rifle Division in the area southeast of Hiitol, but everything ended completely to no avail, and on August 11 the enemy finally cut off the troops encircled near the northern shore of

Ladoga. On August 15, Soviet troops left the city of Sortavala and retreated to the Ladoga skerries. It was decided to evacuate the encircled (the remnants of the troops of the 168th Rifle Division, the 142nd Rifle Division, the 198th Rifle Division, the 367th Rifle Division of the 71st Division, part of the forces of the 115th Rifle Division) by water, by ships of the Ladoga Military Flotilla. By August 23, all the evacuated units were delivered to the island of Valaam and subsequently transported to Leningrad. In total, 26 thousand people, 155 guns were evacuated, which is approximately half of the regular strength of the encircled units and formations. The consolidated group, made up of border guards and scattered units of the retreating troops, under the command of Colonel S.I. Donskoy held Kexholm and the coastal road until August 21, 1941.

On August 14–16, the 10th Infantry Division continued its advance to the south. In a two-day battle near the village of Raisala, the 265th rifle division was finally defeated. In the documents of the 43rd Infantry Regiment of the 10th Division there is such an entry: *"... The Russians bravely defended themselves, but the stubborn Finns attacked them, and the matter was quickly resolved ... According to the stories of the prisoners, the regiment commissar first made a fiery speech about Stalin and the Soviet Motherland, after which he took with him 6 submachine gunners, two light machine guns and fled ... The commander of the 946th Infantry Regiment, Major Lashenko, behaved quite differently - in his last hour he ordered the soldiers to shoot him ..."* [31]

Even before the end of the battle near the northwestern coast of Lake Ladoga, the 18th Infantry Division of Colonel Payari went on the offensive (this is the same division whose units on the evening of July 3 repelled an attempt by the 10th mechanized corps to capture and "ignite" Imatra station with "flamethrower tanks"). Having thrown back the 115th Rifle Division from the border (the surviving units of which retreated to the western bank of the Vuoksi River, into the defense zone of the 50th SC), the Payari division quickly moved forward and on July 8-10 crossed the railway in the Antrea-Sayrala sector (see map No. 13). On August 16, in the area of the village of Oravankyuto (east of Vuosalmi), the advanced units of the 18th Infantry Division were attacked by the forces of the 33rd Border Detachment and tank units attached to it. A fierce forest battle continued for three days, during which the Finns managed to surround and completely defeat the border guards, while the commander of the detachment and the battle banner of the unit

were captured [314]. On the evening of August 17, the Payari division began to cross the Vuoksi River. A veteran of the division, Lieutenant L. Yantti writes: *"We have advanced a lot in a day. Our 14th heavy artillery division crossed the Vuoksi on rafts. It still makes my hair stand on end when I remember how we loaded guns onto rafts in*

*pitch darkness...*" [314]. By the middle of the day on August 18, the entire 27th Infantry Regiment of the 18th Infantry Regiment, which had captured a bridgehead 5 km deep, was already on the western bank of the Vuoksi. Apparently, only at that moment did the headquarters of the Northern Front understand the simple and flawless plan of the Finnish command. Clearly aware of the weakness of their artillery and the almost complete absence of bomber aircraft and tanks, the Finns were not going to "punch through" the line of concrete pillboxes of the Vyborg fortified area.

Instead, an operation was planned and successfully carried out to force the river. Vuoksi with access to the deep rear of the entire Vyborg group of Soviet troops. By August 20, on the western bank of Vuoksi, in the bridgehead captured by the Payari division, there were already units of the 2nd and 10th infantry divisions. Commander of the Northern Front, Lieutenant General M.M. Popov turned to the Headquarters with a request to provide four fresh rifle divisions and one air division, but the Headquarters no longer had such reserves for the "Finnish front".

On August 20, with the permission of the high command, units of the 50th SC (43rd and 123rd rifle divisions), which had been idle for two months on the border, began to blow up long-term fortifications and retreat south to Vyborg. On August 23, units of the 43rd and 115th rifle divisions, hastily withdrawn to the southeast of Vyborg, launched a counterattack with the task of eliminating the Finnish bridgehead on the western bank of the river. Vuoksi. A fierce battle continued for two days, sometimes turning into hand-to-hand combat. Both sides understood that in this battle the fate of the Vyborg group of troops of the 23rd Army would be finally decided. On August 25, with the support of the 12th Infantry Division, which rapidly advanced from the border along the western coast of the Vuoksi, the Finns defeated the Soviet troops and cut the railway line south of Art. Kamarya. Now only the only "thread" of the coastal road Vyborg-Koivisto connected the troops of the 23rd Army with Leningrad. On the night of August 25, 1941, an event took place that can be considered one of the most outstanding

achievements of the Finnish army or one of the most shameful failures of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. At a distance of 50 miles from the Kronstadt base of the fleet, the Finns launched and successfully completed an amphibious landing operation, landing an infantry division (8th Infantry Division) on the opposite shore of the Vyborg Bay. They landed without having a single large surface warship in this area of the Baltic and infinitely outnumbered by aviation. Having secured a foothold in the landing area, the 8th Infantry Division went on the offensive and on August 26 cut the seaside road between Vyborg and Koivisto. After that, units of three divisions of the Red Army (43rd, 115th, 123rd rifle divisions) received the last order - to destroy military equipment and retreat to Leningrad through the forest near the village of Porlampi. It turned out to be impossible to retreat, since the Finnish troops (12th and 18th infantry regiments) had already organized a solid defense with a front to the northwest. Part of the troops

managed to break through to the shore of the bay near the town of Koivisto. On the night of September 2, three large transports ("Meero", "Otto Schmidt" and "Bart"), accompanied by two minesweepers and two boats, left Kronstadt for Koivisto. Transport "Meero" hit a mine and sank. The remaining two transports, approaching the Koivisto pier at dawn, took on board about 6 thousand people and safely returned to Kronstadt. The evacuation of the personnel of the divisions defeated at Vyborg continued for several more weeks. A total of 14,000 to 20,000 people were evacuated (according to various sources). The rest ended up in Finnish captivity. The commander of the 43rd Infantry Division, General

Major V.V. Kirpichnikov (according to the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for "loss of control of the troops and voluntary surrender" was shot on July 28, 1950, in June 1957 he

was rehabilitated). On August 29, the Finns entered Vyborg, barbarously destroyed by the retreating Soviet units. On August 31, the 12th Infantry Division occupied Terijoki, a border resort village in which, on December 1, 1939, the "people's government" of Mr. Kuusinen was allegedly established. On the same day, the 18th Infantry Division reached the world-famous village of Mainila, which became on November 26, 1939. The fighters of the Payari division did not deny themselves the pleasure of firing five ritual shots from a gun in the direction of the former border river Sestra.

The joy of victory (within one month, Finnish troops liberated the entire annexed territory of the Karelian Isthmus and regained three large cities: Vyborg, Kexholm and Sortavala) was overshadowed by heavy losses. The Finnish army paid a heavy price for the defeat of five personnel divisions of the Leningrad Military District. The total losses (killed and wounded) exceeded 25 thousand people. In some infantry regiments, losses amounted to 25-30% of the regular strength. So, the 28th Infantry Regiment lost 279 people killed and missing, 856 wounded. The 48th Infantry Regiment lost 358 men killed and missing, 923 wounded. The losses of the 7th Infantry Regiment amounted to 480 killed and 1622 wounded, i.e. **more than half of the staff** [363]. For comparison, we recall that in the first 40 days of the war (from June 22 to July 31), the losses of the Wehrmacht (killed, wounded, missing) on the Eastern Front amounted to only 6.5% of the total number of the group (entry in the "Diary" of F. Halder of August 4, 1941)

Despite such heavy losses, *"the enemy had a pronounced offensive impulse."* This is the conclusion reached by the compilers of the above-mentioned "Information on taking into account the experience of the battles of the Patriotic War on the front of the 23rd Army." Regarding the actions of our own troops, the following is said: *"Our main measure to counter the enemy offensive was the organization and deployment of numerous groups and detachments into battle. These hastily created detachments, from different and heterogeneous units, were not combat-ready enough, and some simply fled at the first meeting with the enemy ..."*

*During the withdrawal period, units that did not have experience, training and proper organization could not cling to the next line, where to build a solid defense. In inexperienced and poorly fired units, sometimes an initiated retreat turned into a disorderly flight. Units and subunits dispersed, their control by commanders was lost ... Many of our units and subunits left (and often simply abandoned) their materiel (machine guns, mortars). Very often guns were left to the enemy because the infantry, which was attached to the artillery, abandoned it. Unfortunately, a number of units did not have a rule not to leave our*

*wounded and dead bodies to the enemy ... Where our units showed stubbornness, initiative,*

*perseverance and self-confidence, where the commanders ruled confidently and firmly - we had obvious successes ...* "September 1 The Military Council of the Leningrad Front (August 23,

1941, the Northern Front was divided into Leningrad and Karelian) decided to withdraw troops

23rd Army to the line of the Karelian UR. It is difficult to say whether these troops existed that day, but the 23rd Army had a new (third in one month) commander, General A.I. Cherepanov. By September 3, the scattered remnants of the retreating and evacuated divisions by water were put in order and took up defensive positions on the line of the Karelian UR. The next day, September 4, 1941, the Finnish units on the Karelian Isthmus were ordered to go on the defensive (however, some skirmishes continued until about September 10). After that, the front stabilized on the line of the Karelian fortified area for almost three years, until June 9, 1944.

**The offensive of the Finnish army to the Svir River and Lake Onega** began on September 4, 1941. In addition to those units that fought in Karelia in July-August, the Finnish command transferred the 2nd Infantry division. Later, the 4th and 8th divisions were sent to Karelia. On the other hand, at the end of August, the Headquarters of the Red Army Civil Code decided to send two more reserve divisions to the 7th Army: the 313th Rifle Division and the 314th Rifle Division. These two rifle divisions, indeed, arrived in Karelia, but after another defeat had become a fait accompli.

On September 4, the 6th Corps of General P. Talvel (three divisions), together with the 1st Jaeger Brigade, launched an offensive from the line of the Tuloksy River to Olonets. This day became the "day of artillery" of the Finnish army - 16 divisions (about two hundred guns) took part in the artillery preparation. By the standards of the niche of the Finnish army, it was a huge concentration of firepower (June 9, 1944, the Red Army offensive began with an artillery strike, in which 3.5 thousand guns took part, providing a fire density of 250-300 barrels per 1 km of the breakthrough front) . On the second day of the offensive, the Finns occupied Olonets, on September 7 they reached the banks of the Svir River. On September 8, the Jaeger brigade of Colonel Lagus captured the strategically important railway bridge across the Svir in the area of st. Podporozhye (later Colonel Lagus became the first knight of the highest Finnish Order of the Mannerheim Cross). Further attempts by the Finns to expand the bridgehead on the southern bank of the Svir were stopped by the 314th Infantry

Division, which arrived at that moment at Lodeynoye Pole. Simultaneously with the throw to the Svir, Finnish troops struck in the central zone of the front and on September 8 occupied the village of Pryazha, thus cutting off the only highway in those places connecting Olonets with Petrozavodsk. In a huge forest between Pryazha and Olonets, Soviet troops were surrounded, the number of which Mannerheim estimates at two divisions. In his memoirs, he writes: *"... In the following days, the pincers around these divisions were compressed more and more ... At the cost of enormous efforts, the main part managed to get out of the encirclement, leaving the equipment, in separate groups through forests and swamps. As in the defeat of the "bag" at Porlampi on the Karelian Isthmus, the Russian soldiers even now showed an absolutely incredible ability to endure difficulties and tension, and reports about the battles near Pyhäjärvi spoke vividly about the torment that they experienced, making their way through dense fore*

The brilliant success won by the Finnish troops in early September was actually the last. Subsequently,

the pace of advance steadily fell. It took nine days to walk 40 km from Pryazha to Petrozavodsk. The Finnish army is clearly

"worked out its resource", and the "offensive impulse" after crossing the border, apparently, dried up. The soldiers did not understand why and to what extent they needed to go deep into the vast expanses of northern Russia, and since the Finnish troops - let's repeat this again - were more like a "people's militia" than an unreasoning mechanism of a professional army, cases of disobedience and refusals to continue the offensive ceased. be single. According to the Finnish researcher H. Heinil, on the Karelian Isthmus, refusals to cross the border of 1939 occurred in every second infantry regiment [363]. Even a single case was recorded (and based only on the recollections of eyewitnesses, and not on any documents) when an officer with the rank of captain appealed to his subordinates not to cross the border. We emphasize once again that all the cases described above took place on the Karelian Isthmus, and it would be very reckless to mechanically transfer these statistics to the situation in the units that fought in Karelia, but a certain general trend emerges quite clearly. The hopes of the Finnish command that by cutting

the railway line Lodeynoye Pole-Petrozavodsk, they will be able to deprive the 7th Army of communications with the "mainland". Literally a few weeks before the start of the third stage of the Finnish offensive, the construction of a 400-kilometer railway line connecting Belomorsk with the Vologda-Arkhangelsk highway was completed. Thus, the "northern transport corridor" (Belomorsk-Medvezhyegorsk-Petrozavodsk) was created, which made it possible to supply the troops of the Karelian Front, however, by a very long, roundabout way. Fresh 313th and 114th rifle divisions arrived in the 7th Army along the northern highway. Fierce battles for Petrozavodsk continued for two weeks and ended with the capture of the city on October 1, 1941. Stalin's order to turn the entire abandoned territory into a "scorched earth" zone, formulated by him in

his famous radio address on July 3, 1941, was fully extended to Karelia. Moreover, it was there, due to the relatively slow (slow in comparison with the pace of the offensive of the Wehrmacht tank formations) advance of the Finnish troops, that order was carried out in reality. In Petrozavodsk, up to 50% of the housing stock was destroyed, in Kondopoga - 80%; power plants were blown up, sawmills were destroyed; the population, which did not have time or did not want to evacuate, was left without the slightest supply of food. Only the arrival of the Finnish army saved tens of thousands of people from starvation. Which, of course, did not prevent and to this day does not prevent some authors from reading the pages of books and newspapers with lamentations about the "meager rations" and the "inhuman racist policy" of the Finnish occupiers. October 1941 began, and an early and very severe winter began that year. After the capture of Petrozavodsk, the main efforts of the

Finnish army were aimed at mastering Medvezhyegorsk and the inter-lake defile between Segozero and the northern tip of Lake Onega. Fights of "local significance" in the Snowy, roadless and deserted region of northern Karelia continued until December 6th. Medvezhyegorsk changed hands several times. In the end, the Finns occupied the city and the southern section of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. At this, the offensive of the Finnish army was stopped everywhere. On the same day, December 6, 1941, the Finnish parliament adopted a solemn resolution on the reunification of the liberated territories with Finland; territories outside the borders of 1939 received the status of a military occupied



zones. The Finnish 3rd Army Corps was withdrawn from the operational subordination of the headquarters of the German army "Norway" and returned to Mannerheim's disposal. Even before the end of 1941, the mass demobilization of the Finnish army began. By the spring of 1942, a total of 180,000 people had returned to peaceful work.

As a result of the fighting in Karelia, which lasted a total of almost five months, the Finnish army moved the front line to the line of natural water barriers Segozero - the western shore of Lake Onega - the Svir River - the southern shore of Lake Ladoga. In the eastern part of the Svir River, a bridgehead was created along the southern bank of the river up to about 15 km deep and up to 100 km wide, which could be used as a "foreground" of the main defensive line. From a military point of view, a huge success was achieved, since instead of the former winding frontier line, which did not have a single serious natural frontier, now it was actually only a relatively short front line along the Svir River that had to be defended (see map No. 15). Ultimately, however, the negative political consequences of the invasion of the sovereign territory of the Soviet Union turned out to be much more significant. But in the late autumn of 1941, Helsinki had not yet thought about this ...

The losses of the Finnish army were very high. According to Mannerheim (and according to modern Finnish historians), the losses of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war exceeded the losses suffered by Finland in the "winter war". Irrecoverable losses amounted to about 27 thousand people: 26 thousand killed and 1 thousand captured. About 80-90 thousand more people were out of action due to injury or illness (all figures should be considered as indicative, in the works of different authors they have a spread of 10-15%). Thus, the total losses are measured in figures of 110-115 **thousand people, which is about 40% of the regular strength of all combat units of the Finnish army**. Without much exaggeration, we can say that the Finnish army crawled to its convincing victory, half-dead from fatigue and losses.

As for the losses of the Red Army, the only reliable figure is **the number of prisoners taken into account by the Finnish command: 64188 people** [28]. The exact number of killed and wounded Red Army command of the Finnish army, of course, could not know. Soviet historiography did not know any "2nd Soviet-Finnish war", and the term "continuation war" was known, but only as one of the most vile inventions of the bourgeois falsifiers of history. Accordingly, no separate accounting of losses on the Finnish front was carried out (because there was no "Finnish front", according to Soviet historians, but there was "participation of the Finnish military in Hitler's aggression against the USSR"). In addition, Soviet historiography was reluctant to mention prisoners, so irretrievable losses (killed, prisoners, deserters) were always given in summary form, without being divided into separate components. The fundamental work of a group of Russian military historians ("Secrecy removed. Losses of the Armed Forces of the USSR")

under the leadership of Colonel General Krivosheev contains data on losses in the "Strategic defensive operation in the Arctic and Karelia" (June 29–October 10). As you can see, the chronological framework does not quite coincide with the actual duration of hostilities (which in northern Karelia ended only in early December); on the other hand, the cumulative loss figure also included the losses of the 14th army, which fought with

Germans in the Arctic. The losses of the "army defensive operation on the Karelian Isthmus" are included in the total losses of the troops of the Northern Front in the period from July 10 to August 23 during the "Leningrad defensive operation" [9].

Somewhat more informative is the information about the losses of the fronts (Northern for the entire period of its existence and Karelian in 1941) [9]. The numbers of those killed and missing are divided, as a result, the ratio of the number of wounded and killed fits into the standard 1 to 3: chronologically, all periods of the war are included, except for the last, most tragic week of fighting on the Karelian Isthmus (surrounded and defeated formations of the Vyborg group from August 23 were already considered troops of the Leningrad Front). If it is rather conditional (i.e., based on the assumption of a proportional dependence of the number of losses on the number of divisions of the Northern Front that fought on the "German" and "Finnish" fronts) to assume that the losses of the 14th Army in the Arctic amounted to 25% of the total losses of the Northern front, then we can come to the following approximate estimate **of the losses of the Red**

**Army in the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War:** - Karelian Front (from August 23 to the end of 1941) - 14,720 killed, 19,317 missing,

43,758 wounded and sick; - Northern Front (from June 29 to August 23, 1941, excluding the losses) - 17,750 killed, 47,343 missing, 47,178 wounded and ill.

A total of **32 thousand killed, 67 thousand missing, 91 thousand wounded and sick, total losses - 190 thousand people.**

Most likely, these figures are quite realistic. The fact that the resulting number of missing persons (67 thousand) is greater than the number of those captured (64 thousand) is not surprising, since in addition to prisoners, the category of "missing" includes the dead and wounded left on the battlefield during the retreat, as well as deserters. For all their inaccuracy, even these very arbitrary figures allow us to draw some very specific conclusions.

First. The total losses (about 190 thousand people) are equal to the number of 13 rifle divisions, fully staffed according to the wartime staffing table. In other words, the 23rd and 7th armies of the Northern Front, as well as the reinforcements they received during the war, were almost completely disabled. And this means that the word "defeat" in the title of this chapter is the only exact definition of what happened in the summer-autumn of 1941 among the forests and lakes of Karelia. Second. The combat losses (killed and wounded)

of the Finnish and Soviet armies are quite comparable. Due to the conditionality of our assessment of the losses of the Red Army, it makes no sense to give exact quantitative ratios, but in any case we are talking about values of the same order. And in this the fighting on the Finnish front is radically different from the situation on the "German front", where the enemy's losses were many times less than the losses of the Red Army. The Finnish army did not know how to fight "with little blood" against the Red Army, armed at the level of the best world standards (and it could not, taking into account the level of training of the bulk of the personnel, the weakness of artillery, the almost complete absence of tanks and aircraft).

Third. Even on the Finnish front (that is, where the enemy did not have any technical superiority and could not cut the defenses of the Soviet troops with "tank

wedges"), the loss of prisoners in the Red Army turned out to be twice the number of those

killed. Fourth. No matter how heavy the losses of the Red Army during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, they still turn out to be much less than the losses in the monstrous massacre of the "winter war" (127 thousand killed and forever missing, 232 thousand wounded, frostbitten and sick) [9].

Concluding a brief review of the events of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war, one cannot fail to mention the fate of the Soviet military base created on the Hanko Peninsula "leased" from Finland.

The real task of the Hanko naval base was to create in advance a springboard for the landing of the Red Army troops 100 km from Helsinki. After the pre-war plans for the invasion of Finland had to be forgotten (and this happened already a week after the start of the war), the continued existence of the Soviet base on Hanko lost any operational meaning. The declared task of the base ("to block the entrance to the Gulf of Finland with artillery fire") remained unfulfilled: the Hanko naval base did not fire **a single shot at the ships** of the German fleet. For the simplest reason - the Germans were not going to enter their fleet into the Gulf of Finland, and if they had gathered, they would have calmly passed along the southern fairway, outside the zone of destruction of the base artillery. Two Finnish battleships, the same elusive Ilmarinen and Väinämäinen, undertook several night artillery attacks on the Hanko naval base (July 2, 4 and 12, September 2 and November 15). The coastal batteries of the base, having no devices for providing aimed fire at night, could not provide at least minimal opposition (the torpedo boats of the Baltic Fleet had already left Hanko by that time) [106].

The cadre personnel (about 28 thousand people) who were on Hanko and a huge amount of first-class weapons should have been immediately evacuated already in early July 1941. Looking ahead a little, we note that in the end, 22.8 thousand soldiers, 26 T-26 tanks, 72 guns of various calibers, 590 machine guns, 22.5 million rifle cartridges, 111 radio stations were delivered from Hanko to Leningrad. In general, the garrison of Hanko, in its real combat potential, surpassed all the Leningrad divisions of the "people's militia" taken together. In July 1941, a successful evacuation was still possible, since the Red Banner Baltic Fleet had not been expelled from its main base in Tallinn and, accordingly, could provide cover for the evacuation at sea and in the air. By the end of

August 1941, the Germans occupied the entire southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. On August 28, the ill-fated "Tallinn crossing" began, after which the surviving ships moved to Kronstadt, which for the next three years became the main base of the Baltic Fleet. After the withdrawal of the fleet from Tallinn and after the loss of all airfields in Estonia, the doomed Hanko naval base found itself in the deep "sea rear" of the enemy, who unconditionally dominated the sea and the air. However, the decision to evacuate Hanko was not made either before the "Tallinn crossing" or after it. Moreover, the Headquarters at least three times (August 13, 14, 21) rejected the corresponding proposals of the Baltic Fleet command. Probably, the Hanko peninsula was dear to Stalin as a memory. As a memory of those unforgettable days of 1939, when he, like the

called the rulers of neighboring countries to bow to him, dictated his conditions to them and drew on the map the borders of the once sovereign states ...

September of the 41st began, and the period of the most fierce fighting began on the southern approaches to Leningrad. The fate of the city hung in the balance, and a large-scale operation was already being prepared to destroy hundreds of industrial and cultural facilities of the "second capital" of the USSR. The garrison of Hanko—not of their own free will, of course—continued the meaningless “sitting,” which later Soviet historiography called “the heroic epic of the defense of Hanko.” The

Pravda newspaper published pathetic “letters from the defenders of Hanko”, such as, for example, the following content: *“On a harsh rocky peninsula, at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, stands the indestructible fortress of the Baltic Red Gangut. For the fifth month we have been defending it from the fascist hordes, not retreating a single step ... ”* The former commander of the KBF (and later a doctor of historical sciences) Admiral Tributs proudly notes in his memoirs *that “despite the difficult conditions of defense, the party organization grew continuously. 4,000 defenders of Hanko joined the Communist Party. More than 1,000 people were accepted into the Komsomol. Some divisions consisted entirely of communists and Komsomol members ... ”*

It is difficult to say who “heroically defended” whom from whom. In early July 1941, the Finns, indeed, made several attempts to break through to the peninsula, but, convinced by bitter experience of the strength and impregnability of the defense line created on the isthmus, they completely stopped all attempts at assault, reasonably believing that sooner or later, the Soviet command would be forced to evacuate the base. Coastal defense units and one (!) Swedish volunteer battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel H. Berggren were left to “supervise” the 25,000th garrison of the Hanko naval base. After that, the fighting on Hanko was reduced to a systematic exchange of mutual artillery strikes and sabotage attacks on the numerous tiny islands surrounding Hanko.

Finally, November came, and a thick crust of ice began to cover the coastal strip of the Gulf of Finland. It was no longer possible to delay the evacuation of Hanko, since the Finns could have stormed the base “frozen in the ice” by ground forces from those directions where no defensive positions had been built. On November 7, the Headquarters gave permission for the evacuation. Before leaving, the “tenants” were ordered to destroy the property of the “owners” as much as possible. *“... We were sent to the city to break and destroy everything: windows, doors, even furniture in the rooms. It was only impossible to burn anything so that the Finns would not guess that the evacuation had begun. Everything that they could not take with them, I rely on spoiling or destroying it. Bags with different cereals - peas, rice, millet, buckwheat - were poured into one pile and doused with kerosene, after that there was no need to burn it ... Much on the peninsula was mined. They laid mines on roads and in houses. At the bakery, the last pastries were left on the boards that pressed the contacts of the explosive charges...” [189].*

In fact, partial evacuation began on October 27 and continued on November 3 and 5, i.e. even before receiving an order for the complete evacuation of the Hanko naval base. The first caravans passed through the Gulf of Finland, literally stuffed with German, Finnish and Soviet mines, quite successfully: without loss of ships and people or with minimal losses. On November 22, 23, 25, 28 the following caravans passed. Losses grew - 728 died on sunken ships (including the destroyer Sharp-witted)

Human. Late in the evening of December 2, the last, largest caravan of ships left Hanko: the Iosif Stalin turboelectric ship, which took on board about 5,600 people, two destroyers and six minesweepers. In total, there were more than 8.6 thousand people on all ships. Later, naval specialists pointed out many mistakes made when escorting a caravan through a continuous "palisade" of minefields. Be that as it may, but at 1 o'clock in the morning, in pitch darkness, the ships entered the zone of a dense minefield, presumably German. Within four minutes, explosions of mines from three minesweepers killed six paravanes (sweeping devices);

a strong wind blew a huge transport with high passenger decks away from the swept lane. At 1.18 a.m., a concussion from a nearby mine explosion disabled the steering control of the transport, the ship began to move in a vicious circle and at 1.22 a.m. it was

blown up by the first mine, which destroyed the steering control and the propeller. At 1.26 the next explosion destroyed the bow of the ship. The uncontrolled vessel was slowly blown away by the wind towards one of the Soviet minefields. Attempts to take the transport in tow were unsuccessful, and at 03.31 there was the next strongest explosion (presumably the detonation of artillery ammunition due to an explosion on a Soviet mine). Minesweepers stubbornly tried to save the evacuees, but the strong seas did not allow mooring to the sinking ship. People jumped from the "Stalin" into the icy water of the December Baltic and tried to swim to

lifeboats and rafts...

According to the report of the KBF command, by dawn on December 3, 1740 people were removed from the transport. Detachment commander Vice Admiral V.P. The thrush on the destroyer Stoykiy left the disaster area at 2 am and went east to the island of Gogland (Suursaari), where it arrived safely at 2 pm on December 3. The remaining ships of the caravan with surviving people arrived at Gogland on the evening of December 3rd. Meanwhile, the Joseph Stalin (Dutch-built in 1940), warped by explosions, was still afloat and slowly drifting towards the Estonian coast. On the morning of December 4, the ship ran aground off the coast, 20 km west of Tallinn. At this moment, the commander of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet apparently remembered the order of the real I. Stalin (Stavka directive No. 270 of August 16, 1941 "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to prevent such actions"), which demanded: "*If part of the Red Army instead of organizing a rebuff to the enemy, they will prefer to surrender - to destroy them by all means, both ground and air.*" Admiral Tributs ordered to finish off "Joseph Stalin" with bomber strikes and torpedo boats [106]. Finish off together with "*units that consisted entirely of communists and Komsomol members.*" This order of the admiral (as well as many others) was not carried out - formally due to bad weather and heavy icing of torpedo boats. Hopefully that wasn't the only reason. By noon on December 4, 1941, German and Finnish ships approached the "Stalin" and removed about 4 thousand people from it, who became prisoners of war as a result. In total, during the evacuation of the Hanko naval base, irretrievable losses (dead and captured) amounted to 4987

people. The leader "Leningrad" was damaged and got up for repairs, three destroyers ("Sharp", "Severe" and "Proud"), the patrol ship "Virsaitis", four minesweepers, and the hospital ship "Andrey" were blown up by mines and sank.

Zhdanov", transport "Joseph Stalin", more than 10 small class vessels (torpedo boats, sea hunters). These losses, comparable to losses in a major naval battle, were **the only practical result** of the creation in the spring of 1940 of the Soviet naval base on the Khanko Peninsula.

## Chapter 4.3

### THIRD ATTEMPT

If the Finnish army won a brilliant victory in the hostilities of the summer-autumn of 1941, then on the "political front" the situation worsened every day. It was impossible to "sit on two chairs" for a long time, especially since these "chairs" had quite distinct interests of their own.

Hitler was absolutely not interested in the promises that Mannerheim gave to someone in 1918, *"swords in sheaths"*, *"dawn rising over the White Sea and Olonets Karelia"* and other prettiness. The Finnish army was expected (and then demanded) to participate in the assault on Leningrad and the offensive from the line of the Svir River to Tikhvin and Volkhov to create a "large encirclement ring" around the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts of

the Red Army. For both, the proposals of Ryti and Mannerheim gave the Germans a polite written refusal. On September 4, 1941, A. Jodl, the chief of staff of the Wehrmacht's operational leadership, arrived at the Mannerheim Headquarters in Mikkeli as a "chief-persuader". He presented Mannerheim with Germany's highest military award, the Knight's Cross (called the "Iron Cross" in Soviet historiography). Mannerheim accepted the order with gratitude, but categorically refused to advance beyond the Svir and jointly with the Germans to storm Leningrad. In November, the commander of the 3rd AK, General Siilasvuo, began to openly sabotage the orders of the headquarters of the German army "Norway" (whose operational subordination was the Finnish corps) to attack the Murmansk railway in the Kestenga-Lukhi strip (see map No. 7). All

this could not but cause growing irritation in Berlin, which was accustomed to a completely different style and way of interacting with its satellites. This method is now well known. First, with the help and support of the German special services, an extremist, nationalist organization of a fascist persuasion was created ("Ustashe" in Croatia, "Salashists" in Hungary, "Iron Guard" in Romania, "Glinkovites" in Slovakia), then dictatorial power was either directly transferred to this organization, or else it was kept as an armed, all-powerful "opposition"; a Hitlerite puppet was placed at the head of a doomed country; the armed forces came under the complete and undisguised control of German officers. And only after the completion of all the "preparatory measures" did the units and formations of the satellite country join - again, under the direct and direct command of the Nazi generals - to the next aggressive campaign of Germany. Nothing like this happened in the case of Finland. The extreme right, pro-fascist

"Lapuan movement" was banned and crushed in the early 1930s, its leaders ended up in prison. There was no question of any revival of such organizations in Finland. The country maintained a democratic constitutional system, not allowing even the slightest interference by Germany, the Nazi Party and the SS in the internal affairs of the country. Moreover, the Germans were warned about this in advance: on June 3, 1941, during a meeting with the military

Representatives of Germany, Chief of the Finnish General Staff Heinrichs stated that *"an attempt to establish a 'quisling-type' government in Finland will immediately put an end to German-Finnish cooperation"* [65]. By the way, about Quisling (the head of the puppet "government" of occupied Norway, was executed on October 23, 1945 for cooperation with the Nazis by court verdict) - Finland continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the legal government of Norway in exile, and the Norwegian ambassador was in Helsinki. In order to appreciate this situation, one should remember that in May 1941, the Soviet Union, demonstrating loyalty to Berlin, broke off diplomatic relations and expelled the Norwegian embassy from Moscow.

On the other hand, the Germans could not but recognize the fact that the Finnish army was fighting very successfully against the Red Army, while the Romanian and Slovak units turned out to be suitable only for robberies and punitive raids on partisan areas, and the Italian divisions (named instead of "normal" numbers with the names of the heroes of ancient antiquity) turned out to be generally useless. As a result, Germany continued to provide signs of attention and assistance both to Mannerheim personally and to Finland as a whole. So, already at the end of October 1941, the Finnish economy was in a state of such an acute crisis that the Finns were forced to ask Germany for 175 thousand tons of grain, without which the country's population simply would not have survived until the next harvest, 150 locomotives and at least 4 thousand wagons for a transport system that was on the brink of disaster. On November 21, Keitel promised to boost grain deliveries, deliver 55 steam locomotives and 900 wagons by sea, while recalling that due to the lack of "land contact" (i.e. Mannerheim's refusal to advance from the Svir River to Tikhvin), larger deliveries are technically impossible [65].

With each passing day, Finland's relations with its former Western allies worsened. And in this case, the pressure came from two sides at once. The Germans (not without reason) were outraged by this. that in the capital of the state to which they have provided and continue to provide such valuable assistance, there are embassies of the main opponents of Germany. As early as July 9, 1941, Ribbentrop demanded a severance of diplomatic relations between Finland and Great Britain (the United States at that time was not officially at war with Germany, so Ribbentrop had no formal grounds for demanding a severance of diplomatic relations with America). On July 22, the Finns responded to this demand with a vague promise *to "conduct appropriate negotiations and, if necessary, break off diplomatic relations with Great Britain."* The situation escalated by itself after on July 30, carrier-based attack aircraft from the English aircraft carrier *Furies* attacked German ships in the Norwegian port of Kirkenes and in the Finnish Petsamo. And although the targets were German military installations in the far north of Finland, which was actually controlled by German troops, this episode allowed the Finnish government to comply with Berlin's demand without "losing face" and without needlessly exacerbating relations with England. The Finnish Embassy was withdrawn from London, the British responded in the same way, but the process did not go beyond this.

went.

On the other hand, Comrade Stalin, who at lightning speed got used to his new (and frankly, completely unexpected for him) role of "a member of the anti-Hitler coalition of democratic countries", began more and more



persistently - no, not to ask, but to demand from Churchill and Roosevelt more and more concessions, gifts, etc.

Already on July 18, Stalin, in a letter to Churchill, proposed the creation of a new front against Hitler in northern Europe. This meant the active operations of the British air and naval forces, as well as the landing in northern Norway of one British division or "Norwegian volunteers for insurrectionary operations against the Germans." It is possible that the air raid on Kirkenes and Petsamo, which served as the reason for the termination of diplomatic relations between Finland and England, was organized in response to Stalin's demand. As for

Stalin's constant demands to declare war on Finland, London and Washington could relatively calmly ignore them only until Finnish troops crossed the 1939 border.

Neither England nor the United States ever recognized Stalin's conquests in Europe in 1939-1940 as legal, the aggression against Finland was officially condemned by the League of Nations, President Roosevelt, as you know, circulated in December 1939 the demands of a "moral embargo" (a ban on the supply of aviation and aircraft engine equipment) on the USSR, so the Allies were not going to demand from Finland compliance with the terms of the predatory Moscow Peace Treaty of March 12, 1940. Not the last role was played by the fact that the Soviet bombings of June 25-26, 1941 and their consequences were seen by British and American diplomats with their own eyes. The situation began to change after in September 1941 the Finnish army advanced tens and then hundreds of kilometers deep into the sovereign territory of the USSR. On September 22,

1941, Finland received an official note from the British government, which contained a demand for the withdrawal of Finnish troops to the 1939 border line and a warning that in the event of further advance deep into Russia, "the British government will be forced to recognize Finland as an enemy both during the war, *so also at the conclusion of peace*. From September 29 to October 1, 1941, negotiations were held in Moscow, at which an agreement was reached on the Anglo-American deliveries of weapons, military materials and food to the Soviet Union. One of the shortest "transport corridors" passed through the waters of the North Atlantic and the Barents Sea to the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. From that moment on, America could no longer look indifferently at the course of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war. On October 27, 1941, the US government sent an official note to President Ryti, where, along with the demand for the withdrawal of troops to the 1939 border, it was stated that "*if ships carrying military supplies sent by the United States to the north of the Soviet Union are openly or covertly attacked from territory under Finnish control, then such an incident will cause an immediate crisis in relations between Finland and the United States*" [65]. Finally, on November 28, 1941, the Finnish government received an English ultimatum, in which a specific day was

named - December 5, 1941, after which Finland was to "*stop military operations and refrain from participating in any hostile* (in relation to the USSR and Great Britain) *actions*." If this ultimatum was not carried out, Finland would be at war with England. The next day, November 29, 1941, the US Ambassador to Finland gave Mannerheim a personal message from W. Churchill: "... *I am very*

*I am saddened by what, in my opinion, awaits us in the future, namely, that we, **due to loyalty** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), are forced to declare war on Finland in a few days ... I hope that I am able to convince Your Excellency that we will defeat the Nazis. For many of your country's English friends, it would be a shame if Finland ended up on the same bench as the accused and defeated Nazis. Remembering our pleasant conversations and exchange of letters concerning the last war, I feel the need to send you a purely personal and confidential message for reflection before it's too late" [ 22].*

The explanation given in Mannerheim's memoirs of the reasons why Finland rejected the demands of the British government does not look very convincing. At a meeting of the government, it was allegedly decided to agree with the demands of London, especially since they did not even talk about the withdrawal of troops to the 1939 border. The unwillingness to communicate their consent (until the fighting near Medvezhyegorsk was fully completed) was allegedly due to fears that the British would pass this information on to Moscow. Be that as it may, but on December 6, 1941, on the next anniversary of the declaration of independence of Finland and on the day of the end of hostilities on the Soviet-Finnish front, England declared war on it. The United States, much less bound in its decisions by "reasons of loyalty" to Stalin, was quite content with the virtual cessation of hostilities and the absence of any attempt by the Finnish army to cut the Murmansk-Belomorsk railway line. As a result, neither a declaration of war nor a break in diplomatic relations with Finland ever happened.

The year 1942 began with a counter-offensive of the Red Army near the walls of Moscow and ended with the encirclement of German, Romanian and Italian troops near Stalingrad. In January 1943, the Red Army was finally able to break through the German defenses in the area of Shlisselburg, and between the besieged Leningrad and the "mainland" a narrow, 10-kilometer, gunned by artillery, but still really functioning "transport corridor" appeared. This meant that the most terrible chapter in the history of the siege of Leningrad was over. On February 2, 1943, the grandiose battle at Stalingrad ended in complete defeat and the capture of the remnants of the enemy armies. The next day, February 3, 1943, a meeting of the top military-political leadership of Finland was held at the main headquarters of the Finnish army in Mikkeli. The participants were forced to come to a completely disappointing conclusion: Germany would inevitably lose this war, and Finland would have to pay for the fact that she made a mistake in choosing an ally. Practical proposals boiled down to the fact that it was necessary to look for a way for Finland to get out of the war as soon as possible, in which it would be possible to preserve its sovereignty

and state independence. The task, which was very difficult - and turned out to be practically unresolved at the end of 1941 - seemed practically impossible in the new situation. Finnish society and the Finnish parliament were not yet ready to recognize all the victims of the two wars as in vain and agree to a retreat to the 1940 border line. Stalin, intoxicated by the outstanding successes of the Red Army, no longer agreed to a simple restoration of the pre-war "status quo". Secret contacts between Soviet and Finnish representatives that took place during 1942-1943. in the capitals of neutral states, have shown that there is no ground for a compromise agreement.

Moreover, these contacts, as expected, became known to the Germans, which resulted in a demonstrative recall of the German ambassador from Helsinki and a temporary cessation of food supplies in early June 1943.

A ray of hope dawned in Lisbon, where, in the summer of 1943, secret negotiations took place through the US Embassy in Portugal, at which the possibility of landing American troops in northern Scandinavia was discussed.

As a result, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, in agreement with Mannerheim, sent a letter to the US State Department with an assurance that the Finnish army would not interfere with the appearance of American troops in Finland. The appearance of a real "third force" capable of ensuring a peaceful exit of Finland from the war could completely change the hopeless situation for the Finns, but the plans for the Allied landings in Scandinavia remained on paper.

From November 29 to December 2, Tehran hosted the first meeting of the leaders of the three allied powers: Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. To the message of the Western allies that Finland was ready to liberate Eastern Karelia and Olonets (i.e. withdraw to the 1939 border line), Stalin replied with a short remark: "Finland does not want serious negotiations with the Soviet Union." For Stalin, the internationally recognized border of 1939 had already ceased to be a subject worth mentioning. In the end, Stalin verbally promised to show generosity and find, on the basis of a return to the 1940 borders, a solution to the problem that would preserve the independence of Finland. At the level of binding decisions of the Tehran Conference, it was decided - and the Finnish leadership was informed about this through the Soviet ambassador to Sweden - not to extend the demand for "complete and unconditional surrender" to Finland, which the future victors agreed to consider as the only possible form of ending the war with Germany and its allies. .

It is possible that Roosevelt also made certain promises to Stalin on the "Finnish question." On January 30, 1944, the government of Finland received an official note from the United States, which stated that the longer Finland delayed the conclusion of a peace treaty with the USSR, the more unfavorable the terms of this treaty would be for her. On the same days, at the airfields of the Leningrad and Novgorod regions, recently liberated from the German occupiers, the last preparations were being completed for the largest ever war (not the Soviet-Finnish, but World War II) air operation of the Soviet Air Force. Preparations for this operation began as early as

December 1943, immediately after the completion of the Tehran Conference. The quite obvious task - to put pressure on the Finnish leadership, to demonstrate to them the immeasurably increased military power of the Soviet Union, was perhaps not the only one. Stalin's ambitions required demonstrating to the West that Soviet strategic aviation was also capable of inflicting crushing blows, turning entire cities into dust and ashes. The capital of Finland, with its weak and outdated air defense system, seemed like an ideal target for such a demonstration. Almost all long-range aviation (ADD) of the Soviet Union was involved in the multi-day operation. Gone are the instructions to "bomb in small groups of separate units". At equal intervals of 10 days, it was planned to deliver three powerful strikes, in which all combat-ready

aircraft. And these aircraft were no longer light "high-speed" SBs with a bomb load of six FAB-100s, but long-range DB-3fs, American Mitchells V-25s, American Douglasses of Soviet production (Li-2) and heavy four-engine "flying fortresses" Fle-8, capable of lifting the FAB-2000 or even the FAB-5000. The first raid took place on the night of February 6-7. Of the 785 bombers that took off, **728 aircraft reached their target, dropping 6,991 bombs on Helsinki with**

**a total weight of 924 tons.** Nearly one kiloton. Among other things, two FAB-5000s were dropped on the capital of Finland (one such bomb could demolish an entire block), six FAB-2000s and four FAB-1000s. The report of the headquarters of the Air Force of the Karelian Front, drawn up the next day, read: *"Aerial reconnaissance of fighters, carried out at 14.05, found that the whole city remained in smoke ..."* [52]. In the second raid, which took place on the night of February 16-17, "only" 408 (according to other sources - 497) aircraft took part, which dropped 4317 bombs on the city. The most powerful was the third raid (on the night of February 26-27), in which **929 bombers took part, of which 863 reached the target.** 5182 bombs were dropped with a total weight of 1010 tons. A characteristic feature of this raid

was the massive use of heavy and super-heavy bombs: 20 FAB-2000, 621 FAB-500, 1431 FAB-250. A total of **16,490 high-explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on Helsinki, with a total weight of 2,575 tons.** We emphasize once again that this was the largest operation of the Soviet ADD in all the years of the war. And not just the "largest", and not going to any comparison with the famous raids on Berlin described in hundreds of publications carried out at the end of the summer of 1941. Then the Baltic Fleet Air Force dropped 311 bombs on Berlin in the period from August 8 to September 5 weighing 36 tons. The February bombings of Helsinki were varied, for the most part

- unexpected consequences.

When in September 1944 (already after the signing of the Armistice Agreement) representatives of the Soviet military command were able to arrive in Helsinki, instead of a pile of charred ruins, they, to their extreme surprise, found a city full of life. Emotional impressions are fully confirmed by the now known figures and facts. According to the report of the Finnish Air Defense Commander, presented on February 7 to Mannerheim's Headquarters, as a result of the first raid, 64 stone houses were destroyed and damaged within the city, 29 stone and 330 wooden buildings were destroyed or burned down in the suburbs. 83 people died, 322 were injured. In the port of Helsinki, two cargo ships and one patrol boat were destroyed [52]. The casualties and destruction, as we see, are significant, but in no way correspond to the expected result from the release of 7 thousand bombs with a total weight of almost a kiloton. According to Finnish aviation historian K.F. Geusta, only 799 bombs fell in the "populated areas of the city", which, as you can easily see, is only 4.8% of the total number of bombs dropped during the three raids, or 8.5% of the total number of high-explosive bombs (the fact that each incendiary bomb fell bombs could not always be fixed individually).

Where did the rest fall, i.e. 15 thousand air bombs? To port facilities and industrial enterprises in the suburbs of Helsinki?

Maybe. But the loss (in total) of three boats and two cargo ships casts doubt on this as well. The same K.F. Geust hypothesizes: *"The use of radar-guided anti-aircraft fire and pre-calculated barrage patterns caused most of the attacking aircraft to turn away from the city and drop their bombs into the sea."* This, of course, is just the opinion of one historian, and therefore questions remain. Perhaps these questions were also asked to the Chief Marshal of Aviation, the commander of the ADD, comrade A.E. Golovanov. One thing is indisputable - at the end of 1944, the ADD was disbanded, and on this, Golovanov's enchanting career (he became a marshal at the age of 39, having gone from the commander of a bomber regiment to the post of commander of the ADD in just 10 months) stopped (it was irretrievably cut short only after Stalin's death).

In general, the February ("peaceful", as they were called in Finland) bombardments were not powerful enough to break the will of the Finns to resist, but quite convincing for those who still hoped for the possibility of concluding an "honorable peace". On February 12, 1941, the Finnish government sent Yu.K. Paasikivi (the former ambassador to Moscow and a constant supporter of the policy of concessions and "appeasement" of Stalin) to Stockholm to meet with the Soviet ambassador to Sweden. On February 23, Paasikivi returned with the following "package" of peace conditions: - the 1940 border; - transfer of the port and area

of nickel mines of

Petsamo to the Soviet Union; - disarmament and internment of German

troops located in Finland; - demobilization of the Finnish army to the size of the pre-

war

peacetime army; - compensation for military losses to the Soviet Union; - Release

and return of prisoners of war to their homeland. It

is noteworthy that the authors of the classic Soviet 12-

volume "History of the Second World War" did not find a place in 12 volumes to list these requirements, limiting themselves only to the following passage: "The Soviet Union set out peace conditions that were regarded in many countries as quite moderate *and acceptable. However, the Finnish side replied that they did not suit her*" [365].

The discussion of Moscow's demands at a meeting with the President of Finland began on the evening of February 26, 1944. A massive Soviet air raid only accelerated the adoption of a negative decision. If the Finnish leaders had already come to terms with the inevitability of a return to the borders of 1940, then the demands for the internment of German troops, the payment of reparations and the abandonment of Petsamo seemed at that time equally impossible and unacceptable. On March 8, a refusal to accept such conditions was conveyed through the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, but at the same time a desire was expressed to start direct negotiations with the USSR. On March 10 and 19, again through Ambassador A.M. Kollontai, the following answer was received: *"The Soviet terms of the armistice with Finland in the form of six points handed over to Mr. Paasikivi on February 19 are minimal and elementary, and only if these conditions are accepted by the Finnish government are Soviet-Finnish negotiations possible..."* [364]. Nevertheless, the Soviet government agreed to the arrival of the Finnish delegation to

Almost at the same time as this. On March 13 and 16, US Secretary of State K. Hull, and then President F. Roosevelt publicly announced that Finland should withdraw

from the war. Thus, the Finnish government was absolutely unequivocally recommended to agree to the existing peace conditions before they got even worse.

And they could only get worse, because after the final defeat of Nazi Germany, Stalin, on the one hand, would no longer need the help of the allies, and therefore restrain his appetites in accordance with their recommendations, on the other hand, he would be able to concentrate on the Finnish front an overwhelming military power.

Unfortunately, this simple logic was not recognized in time by the Finnish leadership. Negotiations in Moscow between Paasikivi and Foreign Minister Enckel on March 27–29 ended in complete failure. Molotov insisted on "six points" and specified two of them. the expulsion and / or internment of German troops in Finland was to be completed by the end of April, and the amount of reparations was determined at 600 million dollars. In order to appreciate this

astronomical figure, it is enough to recall that the famous American "flying fortress" (four-engine B-17 strategic bomber) cost "only" 200-250 thousand dollars. After a two-week discussion, the Government and Parliament of Finland unanimously reached a decision, which on April 19 was transmitted to Moscow through Ambassador Kollontai: *exist as an independent state...* [364]. **It was a mistake, and - as subsequent events showed - a very costly mistake.** Moscow received an additional propaganda "trump card", which it did not fail to use. On April 22, a press conference was held at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, at which Deputy People's

Commissar Vyshinsky spoke. It was an example of demagoguery, worthy of both Comrade Vyshinsky himself and his Boss: *"... The Finnish government in its relations with the German fascists has gone so far that it can no longer, and does not want to, break with them. It placed its country at the service of the interests of Nazi Germany. The current Finnish government does not want to expel German troops from Finland. It does not want the restoration of peaceful relations: It prefers to leave its country in the vassalage of Nazi Germany ... "* [364].

From this speech, it could be understood that only love for Hitler and the desire to "serve the interests of Germany" forced the Finnish government to reject the disinterested proposals of the Soviet Union to "restore peaceful relations." And the persistent and harsh criticism of the "current Finnish government" gave reason to assume. that Stalin would like to see (and even better, bring) to Helsinki a different, "correct" government. On the other hand, such a wide

publicity of the ongoing negotiations led to an acute crisis in German-Finnish relations. In mid-March, the delivery of another batch of weapons was delayed, on April 13 Germany stopped sending grain, and on **March 18 a full embargo was introduced.** In the last days of March, the Chief of the Finnish General Staff was invited to come "to exchange information" at the German Headquarters. As Mannerheim writes in his memoirs, *"the tone of Keitel's speech was such that General Heinrichs stood up and offered to continue the conversation in private."* Things did not come to assault at the general level, but the position

The German command remained uncompromising: the supply of grain and weapons can be resumed only if Finland gives official and public guarantees that it will not agree to conclude peace with the USSR.

If for Finland March 1944 was a month of tragic mistakes, then Stalin could rightfully be proud of his Jesuit cunning. Never before had his actions "in the Finnish direction" been so successful. He demonstrated to his hated Western allies a benevolent readiness to take into account their opinions and wishes, even on a question concerning primarily the interests of the USSR. He demonstrated to the allies and the whole world the fact of the negotiations and the arrogant refusal of the "current Finnish government to restore peaceful relations." Finally, Stalin was simply lucky - in Helsinki they clearly overestimated their strength and just as clearly underestimated the seriousness of Moscow's intentions. Now it remains only to wait for the optimal moment for the "final solution of the Finnish question." And Stalin, on the basis of the decisions of the Tehran Conference, knew perfectly well that such a moment would definitely come.

At dawn on June 6, 1944, the largest amphibious operation in world history began - the landing of allied forces in Normandy. The scale of events exceeded everything that the most ardent imagination could previously imagine. 1200 warships, 4126 landing barges, 864 transport ships moved across the English Channel. On June 6, Allied aviation carried out 14,000 sorties. By evening, more than 156 thousand people were landed on the coast - from the sea and from the air. Two floating ports were towed to the captured bridgeheads, a gas pipeline was laid along the bottom of the English Channel, supplying fuel to hundreds, and then thousands of Anglo-American tanks, armored personnel carriers, and self-propelled guns. On the eve of D-Day, Allied strategic aviation destroyed all bridges on the Seine and Loire rivers, thus depriving the German command of the opportunity to transfer tank divisions to the landing area.

The whole world, with bated breath, was waiting for the outcome of the grandiose battle... On June 9, 1944, the roar of an unprecedented artillery cannonade announced the beginning of the offensive of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus. Mannerheim writes that the thunder of the Soviet guns was clearly audible at his Headquarters in Mikkeli, i.e. 200 km from the front line. 3.5 thousand guns, supported by a bombing strike by aviation, which carried out 1150 sorties on June 9, literally wiped out the front line of defense of the Finnish army from the face of the earth. Then, an avalanche of infantry and tanks poured into the gap formed on a narrow 15-kilometer coastal section. Even in uniform (epaulettes instead of Red Army buttonholes), the advancing army did not look like the one that in December 1939, with rifles at the ready, launched an attack on the Mannerheim Line. The new Red Army, having raised new command cadres during the three years of a terrible war, re-equipped with new, in many ways the best in the world, Soviet and American weapons, hardened in battles and confident in its invincible power, set off on another "furious campaign".

On the new strip of fortifications, built at some distance from the front line, which froze in September 1941, the Finns deployed 5 infantry divisions (2, 3, 10, 15, 18th) and two brigades in two echelons. According to official Soviet data. The 21st and 23rd Armies of the Leningrad Front launched the "Vyborg Offensive Operation" consisting of 15 rifle divisions [9]. Thus, superiority in numbers

infantry was "only" 3-fold. And these are indeed modest numbers, if we compare them with the final stage of the "winter war". The new Red Army hoped to solve the task set not by "filling up with corpses", but by resolutely massing tanks, artillery and strike aircraft in the directions of the main attack. At the beginning of the offensive on the Karelian Isthmus, one (30th Guards) tank brigade and 10 separate tank and self-propelled artillery regiments (a total of about 300 armored vehicles) operated.

By the end of the month, four tank brigades (30th, 1st, 152nd, 220th) and 15 separate regiments were already participating in the battle. The absence of large tank formations (corps and tank armies) was another characteristic feature of the Vyborg offensive operation, indicating precisely the increased operational skill of the Soviet command. The conditions of the terrain covered with forests, lakes and swamps did not allow for deep tank breakthroughs, so the armored vehicles were distributed in separate units among rifle formations, the number of which increased to 28 divisions by the end of June. The quantitative superiority of Soviet

aviation was simply overwhelming. -4, Pe-2, Tu-2). In addition, units of the KBF Air Force (about 200-220 combat aircraft) were transferred to the operational subordination of the command of the 13th Air Army. In the first days of the operation, only three fighter groups could cover the Finnish units from the air (14 Messerschmitts

Bf-109G from LLv-24 at Suulajärvi airfield, 18 Brewsters from LLv-26 at Heinioki airfield, 16 Messerschmitts from LLv-34 at Kotka airfield) with a total number of 48 fighters [52]. Later,

almost the entire bomber aircraft of the Finnish Air Force with a total number of 66 aircraft.

In the first week of the operation, the offensive developed exceptionally successfully. The 10th Finnish Infantry Division, which found itself in the direction of the main attack of the Soviet troops, was swept away and thrown back 10–15 km from the front line. As Mannerheim writes, *"The 10th division, which fought near the Gulf of Finland, lost most of its artillery. On June 11, her dispersed units were taken to the Vammelsuu-Taipale line for replenishment and reorganization.* Neither such events, nor such expressions ("scattered units") were previously encountered in the memoirs of the Marshal of Finland. Within two or three days, units of the 21st Army reached the main line of Finnish fortifications and on the morning of June 14 broke through it near the village of Kuuturselkya. To eliminate the breakthrough, Mannerheim sent his main reserve - the only armored division in the Finnish army, which at that time was commanded by the illustrious General Lagus.

There were quite a lot of armored vehicles in the Lagus division (about 120 units), but mostly they were captured Soviet light tanks captured during the Finnish offensive of 1941 or even during the "winter war". The only real force was a battalion armed with German Stug-40 "assault guns".

On June 14–16, a unique tank battle unfolded in the south of the Karelian Isthmus, in which "hopelessly outdated" (according to Soviet historians) by the summer of 1941, Soviet T-26 and T-28 tanks tried to fight against the latest T-34



modifications and heavy self-propelled guns PSU-152, the armament and armor of which theoretically made it possible to resist the German "tigers". By the morning of June 15, the Finns managed to close the "gap" in the defense formed at Kuuturselk, but this could no longer change the overall situation, which was very close to disaster. On June 16 (on the seventh day of the Soviet offensive), Mannerheim was forced to order a general withdrawal to Vyborg and Vuosalmi, 50–80 km from the collapsed defensive line (see map No. 15). The retreat took place in an environment that the commander-in-chief himself describes in his memoirs as follows: *"Powerful enemy columns advanced in the north-western direction. In front of them were only the remnants of the defeated troops, whose will to fight due to the superiority of the enemy in force was undermined ... "*

At this moment, the command of the Leningrad Front made the first mistake in a row. Instead of developing the maximum pace of pursuit and cutting off the retreating Finnish infantry from the only (!) Bridge across the Vuoksi River (such a maneuver would force the Finns to leave most of the heavy weapons on the western bank of the river), an avalanche of Soviet troops rushed along the coastal highway to Vyborg. The capture of this largest city on the Karelian Isthmus took place already on June 20 (on the 11th day of the offensive!) And was marked by an artillery salute in Moscow and the assignment to the commander of the Leningrad Front, L.A. I speak the rank of marshal.

*"The fall of Vyborg,"* writes Mannerheim, *" was a bitter blow to the morale of the troops and at the same time meant the loss of a strong stronghold, which should have tied up significant enemy forces with a stubborn defense."* And yet, something else was much more important - the Finnish troops were able to retreat in an organized manner to a new defensive line formed by a natural barrier created by the lake river Vuoksi, and an unfinished line of fortifications between Vyborg and st. Antrea (see map no. 13). The second -

and incomparably more significant in its consequences - mistake of the Soviet command was that the offensive of the troops of the Karelian Front began only on June 21, 1944. In Soviet historiography, this is a strange mismatch in the actions of the two fronts within the framework of one strategic operation (however, a single Petrozavodsk "this operation could become later, already in the writings of Soviet military historians) has never been commented on in any way. The operational directives of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front stored in the archives also do not contain any mention of the planned interaction with the Karelian Front. Of course, this can be considered a "mistake" only on the assumption that the offensive from the river. Svir to Petrozavodsk was generally planned in advance. It is possible that Stalin hoped to defeat the Finnish army with an offensive on the Karelian Isthmus and further deep into southern Finland, after which Karelia would "fall into his hands" by itself. At least, this is the version of what happened that Mannerheim expresses: *"Perhaps the Russians expected from the very beginning that only a powerful group of troops concentrated on the Karelian Isthmus would force us to surrender. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the fact that, having launched an offensive there, they gave us a twelve-day respite on the Svir front and the Maselkaas Isthmus, during which we were able to transfer four divisions and one brigade from there to the Karelian Isthmus. The fact that the enemy was unable to effectively tie up our troops in Eastern Karelia, as well as with the help*

*aviation to prevent the regrouping of our forces, played a decisive role in the battle on the isthmus ... "*

Ultimately, the 4th, 17th, then 11th and 6th infantry divisions of the Finnish army were transferred by rail to the Karelian Isthmus, which allowed the Finnish command to carry out a somewhat organized withdrawal and condense the battle formations of troops on a new line defense.

As if on cue (or was it really on cue?), Soviet historians ended their account of the fighting on the Karelian Isthmus with the capture of Vyborg. After that, the Finns allegedly "asked for peace", to which the invariably peace-loving Soviet government happily agreed. These traditions of fully conscious disinformation have continued to this day: in the most authoritative collection "The Classification Removed", the time frame of the Vyborg-Petrozavodsk strategic operation is indicated from June 10 to August 9, but data on the losses of the troops of the Leningrad Front are given only for the period June 10 to June 20 [ 9]. So what happened from June 20 to August 9? The Soviet government patiently waited until "the defeated White Finns sue for peace," and not a single soldier died in the troops of the Leningrad Front during this time? If only... With the capture of Vyborg,

everything was just beginning. In the evening (at 23.30) on June 21, the operational directive of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front No. 74 / op was signed, *in* which the troops of the front were ordered: " ... *to continue the offensive with the task no later than 26.6 . me. - M.S.). At the same time, to clear the Karelian Isthmus from the enemy northeast of the river and lake Vuoksi by the offensive of part of the forces on Khiitola-Kexholm ... "* [365]. There is not a single mention in the multi-page directive that after reaching the Imatra-

Lappeenranta line (that is, FOR THE 1940 border line), the troops were to stop and go on the defensive. In fact, reaching this line was designated only as a task for the next (after the capture of Vyborg) week! Interesting, although not quite concretized information is also found in the memoirs of Colonel General M.M. Popov. In April 1944, he returned to "his" Leningrad front, this time as chief of staff of the front. General Popov, in a soldierly way, writes directly: "*The task of the operation was to destroy the main forces of the Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus and to leave our troops northwest and west of Vyborg with that. in order to create a threat **to the most important vital centers of Finland in the south of the country*** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) ... On June 21, 1944, the Stavka ordered the Leningrad Front to continue its offensive on the isthmus **to invade deep into Finland "** [194].

Some idea of the depth of this "invasion in depth" is given by the order (b / n), which on June 20, 1944, M.M. Popov signed. The order of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front was addressed to the commander of the 13th Air Army, which was given the following task:

*"1. Carry out an areal aerial survey ... of the Kouvola, Kotka, Lappeenranta section ... 3.*

*Complete the survey of the indicated area no later than June 26, 1944. 4. Report on the progress of surveying daily" [ 370].*

At this moment, the Finns, indeed, "asked for peace." On June 22, 1944, the Finnish ambassador in Stockholm, Gripenberg, through the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed Moscow with an inquiry regarding the conditions for Finland's withdrawal from the war. The next day, June 23, Kollontai transmitted the following response from the Soviet government: *"... Since we were deceived several times by the Finns, we would like to receive from the Finnish government an official statement signed by the Prime Minister or Minister of Foreign Affairs that Finland capitulates and asks for peace at the USSR. If we receive such a document from the Finnish government, Moscow will agree to receive a delegation from the Finnish government..."* [364]

These few phrases have had serious consequences and have a long history of interpretation. The question, indeed, is not easy, since the phrase is composed (intentionally or in vehemence) in a very ambiguous way. If a certain country X capitulates to an armed adversary, then no negotiations with its representatives are already possible, because capitulation means, in the language of jurisprudence, "loss of legal personality." Country X ceases to be a subject of international law and puts itself "at the mercy of the victor" - this is what the term "complete and unconditional surrender" means. After that, there is no need to invite a delegation for negotiations, and it is impossible, because this delegation will be a representative of the non-existent government of the disappeared country. It would have been more natural to sign the Act of Surrender of Finland in Helsinki than in Moscow. On the other hand, even minor officials of the NKID of the USSR perfectly understood the meaning of the term "surrender", and it could not be used in the official statement of the Soviet government "just like that", for the "beauty of the style" alone.

Such close attention of historians to three words ("surrender" and "accept a delegation") is explained very simply: it is one thing to deceive the "White Finnish servants of German fascism", and quite another to deceive your allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. And since Comrade Stalin gave a promise in Tehran **not to demand surrender to Finland**, comrade Soviet historians were forced to rise to the heights of eloquence in order to prove the possibility of partial pregnancy and incomplete surrender. In the presentation of the leading specialist in the history of the Soviet-Finnish wars, Leningrad professor N.I. Baryshnikov, it sounds like this: *"Under these conditions, it would have been logical that an immediate response from Moscow would have followed that Finland should send an appeal to the government of the USSR about surrender, in order to then decide on the issue of peace with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the plenipotentiary of the USSR in Sweden, AM Kollontai, who transmitted this answer, explained on her own behalf that capitulation should be understood as the cessation of hostilities on the Finnish side in order to then reach an appropriate agreement ...*

*"[367] . Here, every word is "yakhont emerald". "The immediate response" was. He couldn't "be". They don't speak (let alone write) this way in Russian. What other "question about peace" could be solved AFTER the "appeal to the government of the USSR about surrender"? Finally, how should one understand "the cessation of hostilities on the Finnish side", while the other, the Soviet side, is conducting these same military operations with the forces of 28 divisions, 4 tank brigades and 15 separate tank regiments? How might this amazing unilateral cessation of hostilities during a war look like in practice?*

All this would have been funny, but the Finns had no time for jokes, because with all the tongue-tied form of presentation, the meaning of the Soviet ultimatum was extremely clear. Finland is invited to surrender to the mercy of the winner, but all previous experience showed that there would be no mercy. There was only one thing left - practically, on the battlefield, to prove to the "winner" that he had

not yet won. And on the battlefield, the situation began to change rapidly. The brilliantly organized and launched offensive of the Soviet troops is gradually starting to fizzle out. On the other hand, Germany provided its dying ally with prompt and effective assistance. On June 13, all restrictions on the supply of grain and weapons to Finland were lifted. On June 19, torpedo boats delivered 9,000 Faustpatrons (hand-held anti-tank grenade launchers) to Finland. Three days later, another 5,000 were delivered by plane. The sudden and massive use of this new weapon for that era gave an effect of operational scale. Prior to this, the Finnish infantry turned out to be practically unarmed, since the small-caliber anti-tank "Marianna" and "Bofors" were only capable of striking sparks from the armor of new Soviet tanks and self-propelled guns. With the advent, and the advent of many thousands, of anti-tank grenade launchers, the Finnish soldier again felt like a fighter on the battlefield, and not a victim brought to the scaffold to the executioner. Mannerheim writes: *"... I remember one case that was really a turning point. When Russian tanks appeared in the area near Leipyasuo, several fearless soldiers from the 4th division, among them both commanders and privates, resolutely moved towards the steel monsters and with several aimed shots from the "armored fist" deprived the first of them of the opportunity to move. The rest [tanks] immediately turned and fled. From that day on, the faith of the troops in the new weapons grew stronger. The depressed mood within a few days was replaced by trust, and again there was a desire to fight. This complete change of mood decisively influenced the fact that the enemy's offensive was eventually stopped ..."* [22].

Of course, the "faustpatron" was not a miracle weapon, and ways were quickly found (and very simple and cheap) to protect tanks from being hit by cumulative hand grenade launchers, but a few days and heifer new weapons made it possible to win, which in the situation of June 44th meant a lot.

Until the end of June 1944, the Finns received 39 Messerschmitt Bf-109G fighters 6, in July - another 19 cars.

This made it possible not only to make up for combat losses, but also to re-equip several squadrons with the latest technology. The problem of mastering new types of aircraft by flight personnel (a favorite topic of Russian historians when they begin to list the "objective" reasons for the defeat of Soviet aviation in the first weeks of the war) was solved in the Finnish Air Force very simply. 4 hours of training flights were allotted for mastering the Messerschmitt even in the relatively "peaceful" year of 1943 [52]. With the beginning of active hostilities, retraining was reduced to 2-3 familiarization flights, and, as the results of the war in the air showed, this was enough for highly experienced and courageous pilots.

In addition to forced deliveries of weapons, Germany made available to the Finnish command and its own combat units. As part of the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe, an air regiment was formed, which received the name "Kyuhlmei connection" by the name of its commander. The compound included 23

Ju-87 dive bombers and 23 fighters (mainly heavy FW-190s, which were also used for assault strikes on ground forces). On June 16, the planes of the "Kühlmei formation" flew from Estonia to the Immola airfield (to the northeast of Imatra) and already on June 20 took part in fierce air battles over Vyborg [52]. From June 20 to June 23, the 303rd brigade of "assault guns" arrived in Finland by sea, armed with 42 Stug-40/42 self-propelled guns. In comparison

with the number of Soviet armored vehicles, this was a drop in the bucket, but for the Finns, the appearance of the 303rd brigade meant a radical increase in the striking power of the counterattacking units, since in the only Finnish armored division by June 21, only 17 Stug-40 self-propelled guns were in combat readiness, 3 - T-34, 1 - KV, 3 - T-28 and 60 T-26 [366]. However, it is worth noting that, judging by the documents of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front and the 21st Army, the appearance of German units, about which Western historians write so much, was not even noticed by the Soviet command ...

Fulfilling Directive No. 74, the troops of the Leningrad Front launched an offensive from Vyborg to Imatra-Lappeenranta. According to the terrain conditions, the route suitable for the movement of armored vehicles passed through the station. Tali and the village of Ihantala (see map No. 13). Over the previous 12 days, the divisions of the Red Army were in a continuous offensive 70-80 km. From Vyborg to Ihantala is only 15 km in a straight line. But it was not possible to pass these 15 km. At the end of June 1944, the most fierce battle in the history of the three Soviet-Finnish wars broke out near these two villages, not marked on any geographical map.

Having concentrated 10 rifle divisions on the breakthrough site north of Tali, by June 25, Soviet troops had broken through the defenses of the Finnish troops to a depth of 4-6 km. It was not possible to advance further. Moreover, as Mannerheim writes, *"the Russians were pushed back somewhat by counterattacks, during which our troops, with almost inhuman efforts, almost cut off the retreat routes of this wedge and did not surround it with a wide ring ... For four days the front line fluctuated in waves, attacks and counterattacks followed one after another in an uninterrupted series ... The last part transferred from Eastern Karelia - the 6th division under the command of the valiant Major General Vihm, who fell a hero in these battles - managed to take up positions in time and stabilize the defense near Ihantala. The offensive, which involved 16-17 divisions, was repulsed. We did not even dare to hope for such an ending. It was a real miracle..."*

On July 5, the headquarters of the 21st Army adopted the next "Plan of Operation to break through the defensive positions of the Finns." The army

troops were ordered: *"... to take control of the border of the state border in the area ... Subsequently, moving on to continuous pursuit in the general direction to the west, destroy the retreating enemy groups and overcome the fortified zone of the border UR on their shoulders, creating conditions for the further offensive of the army troops ..." [371].* According to intelligence, the balance of forces on the front of the alleged offensive

of the 21st Army by July 4 was:

- 2.6 to 1 for infantry battalions; - 5.5  
to 1 in terms of the number of  
machine guns; - 7 to 1 for artillery [372].

After the losses suffered, the infantry units of the Finns were remnants, the number of personnel of which was estimated by the reconnaissance of the 21st Army at 170-260 people per 1 km of the front (according to the Charters of the Red Army, operational density in the defense should have been from 1 to 2.5 thousand people). people per 1 km of the front). And yet, it was not possible to "transition to inseparable pursuit". It was not even possible to advance one step north of Ihantal.

After two weeks of endless attempts to break through the defenses of the Finnish troops on the Tali-Ihantala line were unsuccessful, Marshal Govorov proved once again that he received the marshal's rank not by chance. In February 1940, having placed one division on the approaches to the Finnish pillboxes, the Red commanders immediately drove the next two there. In early July 1944, the commander of the Leningrad Front prepared and began to implement a complex and very promising operation. The idea of the operation was to carry out a deep bilateral coverage of the main grouping of Finnish troops. Another army, the 59th Army, was introduced into the battle, which, in the period from July 4 to July 6, in close cooperation with the Baltic Fleet, captured the islands of the Vyborg Bay and proceeded to land on the northern coast of the bay, deep in the rear of the Finnish troops. On July 4, the 23rd Army went on the offensive, with the task of forcing the river. Vuoksi in the Vuosalmi area and then, advancing along the eastern bank of the river to the north, complete the encirclement of the enemy (see

map No. 15). An attempt to repeat the amphibious landing operation (practically "mirror-replicating" the actions of the 8th Infantry Division at the end of August 1941) was thwarted by the efforts of Finnish aviation and the "Kuhlmei formation".

It would seem that with the amount of fighter aircraft that was used *"for the invasion deep into Finland"*, any Finnish bomber that had the courage to take to the skies should have been immediately destroyed. In reality, everything happened exactly the opposite - Finnish and German fighters provided such cover for their strike aircraft that not a single Finnish bomber was shot down in the landing area from July 6 to 8 [52, p. 351]. Parts of the 59th Army, which nevertheless managed to land on the northern shore of the Vyborg Bay, were stopped and driven back by the German 122nd Infantry Division, which had been transported by sea from the Narva region to Finland shortly before [65].

The offensive of the 23rd Army turned out to be equally fruitless. From July 4 to 9, Finnish troops were dropped from the bridgehead near the village of Yarapaya. On July 9, after a powerful artillery preparation and under the cover of dense smoke screens, the troops of the Leningrad Front crossed the Vuoksi River. On July 10 and 11, fierce battles were fought on the ground and in the air, Finnish fighters again ensured the "immunity" of their bombers, which bombed bridgeheads in the breakthrough area from morning to evening. By July 12, the offensive of the troops of the 23rd Army finally bogged down, and the Soviet troops went on the defensive on the eastern bank

of the Vuoksi. On July 15, 1944, the Military Council of the Leningrad Front, in special Directive No. 80, subjected the actions of the command of the 23rd Army to devastating criticism: *"Commander-23 was given the task of 4.7.44 to destroy the enemy on his bridgehead on the western bank of the river. Vuoksi and develop an offensive along its eastern shore. Sufficient forces and means were allocated for the operation.*

*Instead of an organized and swift strike and destruction of the enemy's bridgehead in one day, the troops of the army trampled in front of him for 6 days. Parts*

*On the 98th SC, having a significant superiority over the enemy (in infantry - 6 times, in artillery and aviation - 4 times), only on the 7th day, at the cost of huge losses (1046 killed and 4265 wounded), they cleared the right bank of the enemy Vuoksi. The reason for the unsatisfactory conduct of the battle is: the complete absence of controlled combined-arms combat ... the analysis of the situation and timely conclusions from it were replaced by the transmission of deliberately false, unconfirmed reports and data ... the control was random and uninitiative ... the commander of the 281st Rifle Division did not know the actual situation, showed lack of will and, sitting in a dugout, did not lead the battle ...*

*The fighting to eliminate the bridgehead and force showed tactical illiteracy, organizational weakness and inactivity of the commanders of formations and headquarters of the 23rd Army ... Due to the loss of command and control, the lack of an elementary organization of the battle, the criminal delay in crossing tanks and SU, the lack of maximum and correct use of the crossing artillery of the 115th SC suffered unreasonably large losses (142nd rifle division - 2476 people and 10th rifle division - 2386 people), and instead of increasing the strike and increasing the rate of breakthrough, the corps actually went on the defensive on an extremely narrow bridgehead ... "[ 373 ].*

It is difficult to say how objective and balanced such assessment of the actions of the 23rd Army was. The troops of the army did not just "stomp in front of the bridgehead", but tried to overcome the defenses of the desperately resisting Finns. Maybe. the appearance of Directive No. 80 was only a reflection of the bewilderment and indignation that seized Stalin and his marshals after another attempt to crush the "Finnish booger" turned out to be fruitless. Already on June 14—

15, Finnish intelligence recorded the fact that the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the south had begun. On July 18, the offensive of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus was stopped everywhere. **At no point on the front did the Red Army reach the 1940 border line, much less cross it.** Burning down the Imatra station failed this time as well... After the offensive on the

main strategic direction of Vyborg-Helsinki ceased, the fighting in the Ladoga Karelia completely lost any reasonable meaning. It was enough to calmly, without unnecessary bloodshed, wait for the start of peace negotiations, because there could no longer be any doubt that the return of Karelia would be one of the indispensable conditions for ending the war, either in Moscow or in Helsinki. Nevertheless, 16 rifle divisions and 3 tank brigades of the Karelian Front continued the offensive launched on June 21. Finnish troops (4 infantry divisions and 2 brigades) received and successfully completed the task of an organized retreat from the Svir River and Petrozavodsk to the line of long-term fortifications, passing approximately through Pitkyaranta-Loimola-Kuolismaa (see map No. 14). On this line, the offensive of the Soviet troops was stopped in mid-July, although hostilities continued on the extreme northern flank of the Karelian Front until August 9th. "On July 21, formations of the 32nd Army entered the border with Finland in 1940. The entry of Soviet troops to the border with Finland meant the final failure of the plans of the Finnish leadership," the authors of the 12-volume edition cheerfully assured the gullible Soviet reader [374]. Indeed, at one single point, in the Kuolismaa-Ilomantsi region, Soviet troops reached the 1940 border line. a cauldron of encirclement, from which the remnants of two Soviet divisions escaped, leaving all their heavy weapons among the forests and swamps.

During the senseless and merciless operation, the troops of the Karelian Front lost 17 thousand people killed and missing, 63 thousand people were wounded. The losses of the Leningrad Front are not exactly known (as noted above, the official data completely ignores the losses of the heaviest battles on June 21–July 18, 1944). but most likely they were many times more than the losses of the Karelian Front. The losses of the Finnish army (mainly on the Karelian Isthmus) were very high. Only irretrievable losses (killed and missing) are estimated in various sources by figures from 26 to 32 thousand people. In other words, the irretrievable losses of actually one month of fighting in 1944 turned out to be **greater than the losses of the victorious offensive** of the summer-autumn of 1941. A

fact that, perhaps more clearly than all others, speaks of a significantly increased 1944 combat power of the Red Army.

The results of the combat operations of the Finnish fighters turned out to be absolutely stunning. According to Finnish data, between June 9 and July 18, LLv-24 and LLv-34 pilots flew 2,168 sorties and shot down 425 Soviet aircraft. At the same time, the Finns themselves lost only 18 Messerschmitts, of which only 10 were in battles with Soviet fighters. The results of the combat work of fighters from the LLv-26 were much more modest - 15 downed Soviet aircraft. True, it must be taken into account that the group was armed with "brewsters" of the 1939 release, which had long and repeatedly worked out the entire resource and, by the standards of any other aviation, except Finnish, suitable only for scrapping. German fighters of the "Kuhlmei formation" made 984 sorties and shot down 126 aircraft [52]. These phenomenal figures at first glance give the impression of unbridled "hunting stories", however, in the official collection "Secrecy Removed" it is reported that losses in the Vyborg-Petrozavodsk operation amounted to 311 aircraft [9]. Again, it is not known whether the compilers of the collection took into account the losses of the Air Force of the Leningrad Front after the capture of Vyborg. But even if we proceed from the "standard" for air battles of the Second World War threefold overestimation of the number of declared victories over real ones, it turns out that for one lost Finnish fighter, there were 8 downed Soviet aircraft.

Mannerheim defined the military-political outcome of the battles on the Karelian Isthmus briefly and very precisely: *"The enemy realized that a huge price should be paid for our defeat"* [22]. Said quite self-critically, without comforting self-deception. The defeat of the Finnish army, of course, was quite possible. In fact, it was just a matter of time and cost. Stalin would not stand behind the price, but there was no time. The 3rd Soviet-Finnish War ended on the same lines (Vyborg - the western bank of the Vuoksi River) and, more importantly, for the same reason as the first, "winter" war. **It was not possible to quickly defeat and destroy the Finnish army, and Stalin did not become involved in a protracted exhausting war, as this could interfere with the implementation of much more significant plans.** The knowledge

of actually accomplished facts equally hinders both writers and readers of military history books. A well-known psychological paradox is that everything that happened seems to be the only possible one, and unrealized alternatives seem completely impossible. But this is nothing more than an optical illusion. Everything could have been very different. Today, even a conscientious schoolboy knows that from the landing of the Allies in Normandy to the capture of Berlin,



long 10 months. But then, in the summer of 1944, no one could know for sure, including Stalin, Mannerheim, Roosevelt and Churchill. And the bomb that exploded at Hitler's Headquarters on July 20, 1944, could explode one meter to the left or right of the place where it actually exploded. And if the assassination attempt was successful, a military coup in Berlin could succeed. In this case, the surrender of the Wehrmacht in the West would have been practically inevitable, and the historic meeting of Soviet and American troops could have taken place not in May 1945 on the Elbe, but in August 1944 on the Vistula. Is it necessary to prove that such an outcome of the war did not suit Comrade Stalin at

all? However, even without taking into account the factor of the assassination attempt on Hitler, the German Western Front at the end of the summer of 1944 was close to a catastrophic defeat. The English historian Liddell Hart, in his textbook *History of the Second World War*, writes: "... *The war could have ended in September 1944. The main forces of the German troops in the West were concentrated in Normandy and remained there until they were defeated or surrounded. The surviving miserable remnants could not offer serious resistance and retreated, but soon they were also destroyed by the rapidly advancing motorized troops of the allies ... As evidenced by captured documents, the Germans had about 100 tanks suitable for combat on the entire Western Front against 2 thousand tanks, which were available to advanced formations allies. The Germans had only 570 aircraft, while the Allies had more than 14,000 aircraft on the Western Front...*" [368].

In mid-July 1944, the battle in northern France was in full swing, and the success of the Allies was not yet so obvious, but in any case, Tali, Ihantala and other tiny villages, lost among the lakes and forests of Karelia, could no longer interest Stalin at that time. the moment when the decisive fate of the war and post-war Europe began the race to Berlin. History has twice outwitted the great deceiver. If Stalin had started the 3rd Soviet-Finnish war in May 1944, immediately after the end of the spring thaw, then, in all likelihood, the outcome of this war would have been completely different - Finland would have had to become a poor Russian "Non-Black Earth". But Stalin pulled and waited for the moment when all the forces and all the attention of the Western allies would be riveted to the strip of the seashore in Normandy and they would not be able to prevent him from implementing plans for the complete defeat and occupation of Finland. As a result, there was no time to develop and complete the success achieved at Vyborg.

Secondly, the enormous efforts that Stalin made in 1941 to force Churchill to at least formally declare war on Finland led in 1944 to a completely undesirable result. This result is visible already in the very first lines of the Armistice Agreement, which ended the 3rd (and last) Soviet-Finnish War, for the Agreement was concluded by "the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, acting *from on behalf of all the United Nations that are at war with Finland...*".

And acting jointly with "His Majesty in the United Kingdom", and even on behalf of "all the United Nations", Comrade Stalin was forced to "step on the throat of his own song", and in many places. If in March 1940 negotiations in Moscow were conducted under the roar of Soviet artillery cannonade, then in September 1944

the elementary requirements of international law had to be observed, as a result of which the fire was ceased two days before the arrival of the Finnish delegation in Moscow (September 7) and two weeks before the signing of the Armistice Agreement (September 19). And the terms of the Agreement had to be negotiated during four meetings (September 6, 9, 11 and 14) with British Ambassador Kerr [364]. And the body, which *"until the conclusion of peace with Finland will take over the regulation and control over the implementation of these conditions,"* received the official name "Allied Control Commission."

In fact, the Allied Control Commission became Soviet, and it was headed by none other than the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A.A. Zhdanov, but the legal status of the "Union Commission" and the need to agree in the future on the terms of the final peace treaty with the same "United Nations" prevented Comrade Zhdanov from working like a Bolshevik, with a spark ... Moreover, the heart of the fiery Bolshevik, exhausted by alcohol, was torn at the thought that Finland could have been "squeezed". M. Djilas writes in his memoirs that in April 1945, during an official dinner in honor of I. Tito in the Kremlin, Zhdanov said: " *We made a mistake that the Finns did not capitulate.*" Stalin (according to Djilas) supported Zhdanov: " *Yes, it was a mistake. We looked too much at the Americans, and they would not lift a finger*" [369]. The resentment was

so great that it outlived Comrade Zhdanov and, through generations of other comrades, has reached our days. As a result, in the collection of scientific articles published in St. Petersburg in 2006, one can read the following passage: "*Since Finland did not capitulate, the task of the Allied Control Commission and its chairman became much more complicated - it was necessary to act through the official Finnish authorities*" [35]. There is no doubt that it was much easier to breathe and work more joyfully in the "countries of people's democracy", where it was possible to act through the "authorities" brought in the convoy of the Soviet army ...

As for the terms of the Armistice Agreement (mainly confirmed in the peace treaty concluded on February 10, 1947 in Paris), they generally corresponded to the "six conditions" of March-April 1944. There were three significant changes, and all of them were not in favor of Finland. Firstly, the Soviet

Union achieved the provision of it "*on the rights of lease of territory and water spaces for the creation of a Soviet naval base in the Porkkala-Udd area.*" Thus, instead of the Hanko naval base at a distance of 100 km from Helsinki, the Porkkala-Udd naval base appeared 20 km from Helsinki.

Secondly, clause 13 was introduced in the Agreement, according to which Finland undertook to "*cooperate with the Allied Powers in the detention and trial of persons accused of war crimes.*" This clause was later used by no means to search for and punish the organizers of the so-called "Karelian partisan detachments" who terrorized civilians, but to justify the demands of the Soviet Union to bring the legitimate leaders of Finland to justice. Thirdly, reparations were reduced to \$300 million, but the payment had to be made in goods at

pre-war (i.e., much lower) prices, which actually increased the severity of reparations even more. Moreover, in the future, the Soviet Union made demands on

payment to him of Finland's debt to Germany in the amount of 6.5 billion Finnish marks (an amount equal to the "rent" for Porkkala Udd for 1300 years) [25]. Formally and legally, this meant that the Soviet Union declared itself the successor of the Nazi Reich. A claim that has some moral and political grounds, but is hardly based on law and right ...

"Someone else's good does not go for the future." The truth of this wise Russian proverb can be seen today by every tourist passing from modern Russian Vyborg to modern Finnish Lappeenranta. From the car window it may seem that not Finland paid the Soviet Union, but, on the contrary, the USSR paid Finland countless millions every year ...

## EPILOGUE

The word "history" has several different meanings in Russian. Accordingly, the attitude to the common expression "history does not know the subjunctive mood" should also be different. If history is understood as the totality of events that took place in the past, then these events, of course, cannot be changed. But for "history", as one of the social sciences, which aims to understand the meaning and direction of the development of the state and the people, consideration of unrealized alternatives is of great importance, because it often allows a more accurate and deeper understanding of the essence of what happened in reality. True, in order not to slide to the other extreme and not to replace science with speculative myth-making, it is very important to determine the "boundary conditions" for constructing alternatives. In particular, to determine their reasonably acceptable chronological depth. In other words, at what point do we start "constructing a different story"? Since the summer of 1939, when Stalin decided to help Hitler in unleashing a pan-

European war? Or from April 3, 1917, when the well-known "sealed carriage" with a small group of major international adventurers arrived at the Finlyandsky (amusing irony of fate!) Station in Petrograd? Or from March 1, 1881, when terrorists in love with the people killed Alexander the Liberator? Or even from the most legendary "calling of the Varangians"?

Finishing the book on the tragic history of the Soviet-Finnish wars, it makes sense to consider possible alternative decisions and actions of the leadership of the USSR, starting from a very definite time line - from the spring of 1941. The choice of this particular "time mark" is by no means accidental. The spring of 1941 is that (almost the only) moment in the history of the Stalinist empire when the interests of the multinational Soviet people and the interests of the "collective Stalin" (meaning by this expression the Boss himself and his inner circle) coincided in the main and in the main. Up to this point, there has been a very obvious conflict of interests. The Soviet people wanted peace and tranquility. Him, the Soviet people, and without

that life was not too fun and not at all easy.

The bloody war and all the countless disasters that fall on the shoulders of ordinary people before, during and after the war were absolutely unnecessary for the people. The Stalinist elite, on the other hand, sought to unleash a large-scale war in Europe, since they saw in the war the shortest (if not the only) way to expand their sphere of power beyond the borders of the USSR. Moreover, a victorious war (and the expected rich spoils of war) was also necessary for Stalin to strengthen domestic political stability, which was pretty undermined by the great massacre of 1937-1938. With such a striking discrepancy between the interests of the people and the authorities, the

discussion of alternatives becomes simply impossible - there is no single criterion for evaluation. From the point of view of the interests of the people, the invasion of Finland, which began on November 30, 1939, and entailed colossal casualties, was a misfortune, a misfortune, a criminal mistake. From the point of view of Stalin's interests, the only mistake was

an insufficient number of troops involved in the operation, which ultimately did not allow the defeat of Finland in a timeframe acceptable for foreign policy circumstances. From the point of view of the interests of the Soviet people, it was necessary already in the autumn of 1939 to provide the enemies of Germany - France and Great Britain - with all possible economic assistance; as they say, "take off the last shirt", but strengthen the Western Front with gasoline, food, ammunition, tanks and aircraft (fortunately, tanks and aircraft were accumulated in the USSR in astronomical quantities). And let them, the British and French, fight against our common enemy! Any working man will agree that it is better to shed sweat than blood. Stalin helped Hitler, but this was not at all a "mistake" - it was an integral part of the plan to foment a pan-European war; without the help of Stalin, Hitler might not have dared to start this war. Stalin's mistake turned out to be only an incorrect assessment of the combat capability of the French army - and nothing more.

In the spring of 1941, war between Germany and the USSR became inevitable. Without going into consideration of the reasons for this (some of them were discussed above in Part 2), we note the main thing: from that moment on, both the people and Stalin had a common interest, a common task. In the war that Hitler carried with him, it was impossible to lose. In such a war, only victory was needed. Based on this task, we will try to identify possible alternatives in the actions of the USSR leadership in the "Finland

direction". And in the winter, and in the spring, and in the summer of 1941, the Finnish army was the main military force in Finland. Germany could (and did) influence the decisions made by the Finnish leadership, but these decisions were made not in Berlin, but in Helsinki. This situation opened up opportunities for peaceful, i.e. the simplest and "cheapest" of all possible solutions to the issue of ensuring the security of the northern borders

of the USSR. Namely: - denunciation of the Moscow Treaty; - the return of all (or most) of the annexed territories; - the conclusion (best of all - through the mediation and with guarantees from Great Britain and the United States) of a

new peace treaty with Finland. This alternative, with a probability close to 100%, could be implemented, since it fully met the interests of all parties. No one had any "platonic love" for Hitler and his regime in Finland - neither the people, nor the parliament, nor the leaders of the state. For democratic Finland, an alliance with fascist Germany was an unnatural, forced step, which had to be taken in the tragic situation in which Finland was driven by Stalin. On the eve of the war with the Soviet Union, Hitler had neither the time nor the resources for a war against Finland. These two countries do not have a common border. The transfer of each division to Scandinavia was a complex and costly maritime operation; the further supply of this division to a large extent depended on the goodwill of Finland, on its readiness to provide its transport routes for the transit of military cargo. In this situation, Hitler could not force Finland to abandon the normalization of relations with Moscow.

The cost of such a normalization in the spring of 1941 could have been minimal. Until the Red Army suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Wehrmacht, Stalin could still negotiate from the position of a strong but generous partner. Maybe,

it would have been possible to reach a peace agreement without the full return of all the annexed territories. Strictly speaking, exactly one issue was strategically important: maintaining the transport corridor around the northern tip of Lake Ladoga, i.e. railway from Leningrad through Kexholm and Sortavala to Petrozavodsk and further everywhere. The solution of this issue made the blockade of Leningrad impossible in principle. Everything else (Vyborg, Koivisto, Enso, forests and lakes of Ladoga Karelia) was just a matter of prestige and economic benefits. In any case, buying pulp in Finland would be an order of magnitude cheaper than fighting against the Finnish army. The issue of a

transport corridor was quite solvable: an agreement on transit, the provision of the railway for the exclusive use of the USSR for the period of hostilities, the creation of an extraterritorial "special zone", etc. Given the desire and political will, it would not be difficult to find appropriate legal formulations. If there was a desire, one could also find those 100-150 thousand tons of grain, with the help of which Germany kept Finland in an economic "stranglehold". Of course, during the war there is no excess grain, but on the other hand, where did the "excess grain" come from in Germany? Is it from Soviet supplies? The grain problem existed, but it should not be overdramatized. In the real story, in the summer of 1944, Sweden undertook and successfully fulfilled the obligation to supply grain to Finland within six months of the break in relations between Finland and Germany. The Soviet Union, without a doubt, possessed incomparably larger areas under crops and food reserves than Sweden. The possible military-strategic consequences of a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Finland are so obvious. that do not need

detailed explanation. Enormous forces could be transferred to the Baltic States (and transferred in advance, by no means waiting for the defeat of the North-Western Front): two mechanized corps, fifteen rifle divisions, numerous aviation and artillery units of the Leningrad Military District. In general, the grouping of Soviet troops in the Baltic States could be almost doubled in this case! Later, in July-August 1941, those reserves that in real history had to be transferred to the 7th and 23rd armies could be sent to the German front (and not to the front of the Finnish war that no one needed). This is about 9 more divisions.

It is not a fact that in this situation the Germans would have been able to reach the suburbs of Leningrad. But with any development of the defensive operation on the southwestern approaches to Leningrad, even with such a catastrophic one that actually took place, the blockade of Leningrad (for the above transport and geographical reasons) would be absolutely impossible. And this would mean not only salvation from starvation of a huge (to this day not known exactly) number of civilians in Leningrad. It is worth remembering how many fruitless attempts to break through the encirclement cost the Red Army, how many soldiers, how many weapons and equipment died in the Sinyavin swamps, on the ill-fated "Neva patch", surrounded by Lyuban. Finally, those 190,000 soldiers and commanders who were killed, captured, or wounded during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War would remain in service.

There was a rejection of a peaceful, political resolution of the Soviet-Finnish conflict. undoubtedly a big mistake. But it was also only part of a major, strategic mistake, expressed in the fact that on the eve of the Great War, Stalin arrogantly rejected any steps towards rapprochement with his future allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. If we discard any cunning, then we must directly admit that this was not a "mistake", but a completely conscious unwillingness to burden oneself with any obligations and enter into such an unusual and uncomfortable alliance with democratic countries for a totalitarian despotism. Stalin - as subsequent events showed - was willing to pass on to the Anglo-American allies only the payment of "damages" from his own reckless policies. Moscow did not want to share close and, as it seemed in May 1941, true "booty".

Moreover, they did not want to give up the former "booty", from the already habitual and "own" annexed territory of Finland.

In line with all these "mistakes" lies the decision to launch an air strike on Finland 25 June 1941

The quotation marks around the word "mistake" are quite justified. Even if we completely discard the version of the provocation of the German special services, we have to state that this decision arose from blatant incompetence, from an amazing mixture of cowardly suspicion and an unjustified underestimation of the enemy. It would seem that after the bloody experience of the "winter war" one should have already come to the understanding that a new war with Finland should be avoided by all possible means. Alas, Voroshilov's nonsense that *"we will crush all the Baltics there at any time under all circumstances"* still sounded in the ears of the Kremlin rulers, and they did not even think about the consequences that their aggressive stupidity could lead to. After June 25, after the catastrophic

defeat of the armies of the western border districts, after the start of a successful Finnish offensive in Karelia, the "issue price" increased many times over. In this qualitatively new situation it would have been much more difficult to "pacify Finland". A return to the 1939 border would be the minimum condition for starting negotiations (while just a few months ago it was the maximum that the Finnish side could only dream of). In any case, Stalin's proposals, expressed in the famous letter to Roosevelt, speak more of a stubborn unwillingness to face the facts than of a firm determination to correct old mistakes. Here is the text of this letter: *"August 4, 1941. I.V. STALIN TO F. ROOSEVELT The USSR attaches great importance to the question of the neutralization of Finland and its*

*withdrawal from Germany. The severance of relations between England and Finland and the blockade of Finland declared by England had already taken their toll and gave rise to conflicts in the ruling circles of Finland. Voices are being heard for Finland's neutrality and reconciliation with the USSR... If the US Government had deemed it necessary to threaten Finland with a severance of relations, the Finnish Government would have become more resolute in withdrawing from Germany. In this case, the Soviet Government could make some territorial concessions to Finland in order to reconcile the latter and conclude a new peace treaty with her ... "* [173].

By August 4, the Finnish army had already completely liberated all the annexed territories in Ladoga Karelia and launched an offensive on the Karelian Isthmus. The experience of the first month of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War already gave quite concrete grounds for the assumption of how this offensive might end. To speak of "some territorial concessions" was, to put it mildly, absurd. One gets the impression that Stalin hoped to "peace Finland" mainly with the help of threats from America and England, and even continued to indulge himself with eternal propaganda clichés about "conflicts in ruling circles."

It is important to note that by that time a precedent had already been set for the official refusal of the Soviet Union from the "booty" seized by looting at the beginning of World War II. On July 30, 1941, the USSR Ambassador to Great Britain I. Maisky and the Polish Prime Minister V. Sikorsky signed an agreement in London in which the USSR government recognized the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland as invalid. Diplomatic relations were restored with the Polish government-in-exile, which for a year and a half had been a favorite object of mockery for Moscow newspapermen. The fact that the same radical steps were not taken in the "Finland direction", unfortunately, is quite understandable. To return (on paper!) the so-called Western Ukraine and Western Belarus to Stalin was not a pity at all - by July 30, 1941, he had already lost them long ago, and only an ineradicable optimist could believe that day that the further fate of these territories would depend from the will of Stalin. In addition, Poland was a generally recognized ally of Great Britain, Polish pilots fought in the skies over London, Polish units fought in North Africa, and without a formal renunciation of eastern Poland occupied in 1939, Stalin could not count on cooperation with England and the USA. Stalin, apparently, did not yet consider the annexed territories of Finland to be irretrievably lost on August 4, 1941, and therefore did not express a clear and obvious readiness to return them to their rightful owner. Neither the long chain of defeats, nor the siege of Leningrad, which had become a terrible reality, shook Stalin's determination not to return a single inch of Finnish land to the "White Finns".

In the end, Stalin was the winner. He won and Finland lost. The price of this victory is hundreds of thousands of lives of the inhabitants of besieged Leningrad, hundreds of thousands of lives of Soviet soldiers who died on the distant and near approaches to Leningrad, Vyborg, Kexholm, Petrozavodsk ... But who counted these victims among us? "We will not stand up for the price ..."

In the preface to this book, the author honestly warned readers that the "Finnish component" of the issue would be considered only in the most minimal degree, and the main attention would be paid to the actions and motives of the USSR leadership. This book, unlike many others written by Russian historians, is not about how Finland entered the war against the USSR. This is a book about how the Soviet Union entered the war against Finland. The book is finished. Now, having fulfilled his promise to readers, the author considers it possible and appropriate to express his opinion on the last pages of the text about the alternatives and mistakes in the actions of the Finnish leadership.



Finland lost the war. This is a fact. Moreover, the fact has long been known and recognized in Finland itself.

Already on September 25, 1944, speaking on the radio, the future President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, said: *"... We all, all the people, must endure our defeat. We lost the war against the Soviet Union, our courageous struggle ended in a heavy defeat ... We need to admit to ourselves and others that our brave and staunch enemy defeated us ... An honest recognition of this fact will become a prerequisite and a touchstone for our national existence, because the nurturing of the thought of revenge and both overt and covert plans to recover what was lost, i.e. thoughts of revenge mean death for our people..."* [35]. The consequences of the defeat were extremely

severe for Finland. The main raw material wealth of the country - nickel mines in polar Petsamo - went to the USSR (now this city is called Pechenga). Together with the mines of Petsamo, Finland also lost a strategically important outlet to the Barents Sea. Finland had to pay huge reparations. From the country devastated by many years of war to the equally devastated Soviet Union, 340 thousand wagons with timber, pulp, paper, machine tools left - if you combine these wagons into a single train, it would stretch from the shores of the Gulf of Finland to Africa [15]. Finland was forced to demobilize its army, transfer the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs into the hands of the communist J. Leino (son-in-law of the infamous "Mr. Kuusinen"), come to terms with the existence of a Soviet military base 20 km from the center of Helsinki, send the country's legitimate leaders to prison just because they zealously fulfilled their constitutional duties. The sovereignty and independence of Finland hung on the thinnest thread, and no one could at that moment vouch for the fact that this thread would withstand the enormous pressure of its eastern neighbor. And for the achievement of SUCH a result, the Finnish army and the Finnish people paid with their lives almost 60 thousand soldiers.

Could Finland have exited the war in a different way and with different results? What alternatives were missed, when and why? At

first glance, there was a way out, and it was quite clear and simple. At first glance, only one thing was required of the Finnish leadership - to do nothing. Leave the situation like this. as it was in April-May 1941. As Comrade Trotsky used to say: "No peace, no war, but disband the army." More specifically, to remain in positions of neutrality, not to allow the deployment (or even passage) of German troops in northern Finland, not to allow even a short appearance of German warships in Finnish ports, not to start hostilities against the Soviet Union. Wait patiently for the end of the world war. With this scenario, Finland, in the "worst" case, would have come out of the war without casualties and destruction, without the loss of Petsamo, without the burden of ruinous reparations. At best, one could count on the fact that the Western allies (USA and Great Britain), as part of the general post-war reorganization of Europe, would force Stalin to return part of the territories annexed in March 1940 to Finland. The picture is very beautiful. Was it feasible? History is always multivariate. Such is the firm subjective opinion of the author of this book. And in this case, there was a non-zero probability of realization

the alternative described above. To do this, Ryti and Mannerheim had to "only only":

- to obtain by intelligence the most reliable information that the Red Army is preparing to conduct the largest offensive operation in the south-west (in southern Poland, Slovakia and Romania), and only "active defense" is planned on the Finnish border for the summer of 1941; - to make an accurate forecast of the

development of hostilities in the future German-Soviet war; not just assume, but come to the firm conviction that this war will be protracted, many years and exhausting, that the Germans will reach Leningrad and Moscow, but will not be able to take them;

- on the basis of such information and such a forecast, refuse (at negotiations in late May-early June 1941) from military cooperation with Germany;

- do not respond to large-scale provocations, such as the bombing of June 25-26, in the hope that in a few days the most severe defeats in the west will force Stalin to leave Finland alone. That, in fact, is all that was required. This

was not done, and Finland came to those tragic results with which she ended the war. Consequently, Ryti, Mannerheim and other senior leaders made a mistake. But there is hardly a single unbiased person who would apply the term "stupidity" to this tragic mistake. Was it easy to make a mistake? To this day, more than 60 years after the war, Russian historians continue to argue and cannot come to a consensus about what Stalin was going to do in the summer of 1941. Many continue to vehemently deny the fact that the Red Army is preparing to conduct a grandiose offensive operation in southern Poland - and after all, preparations for this operation exclusively and only diverted the Damocles sword of the Soviet invasion from Finland, which had been hanging over it since the summer of 1940.

It was even more difficult not to make a mistake in assessing the real combat effectiveness of the Red Army, in its ability to withstand the blow of the Wehrmacht. It was exceptionally difficult for Marshal Mannerheim not to be mistaken in this matter. He knew too much. He served in the Russian army for 30 years, having gone a long way in it from captain to lieutenant general. Mannerheim had experience of personal participation in the last two wars of the Russian Empire (Japanese and World War I), and the catastrophic collapse of the Russian army in 1917 took place before his eyes. Finally, it was he who bore the heaviest burden of commanding the Finnish army from the first to the last day of the "winter war". Was it possible after that not to come to the most pessimistic assessments of the combat effectiveness of the Red Army? Could Mannerheim doubt that the army, which, having a huge numerical and overwhelming technical superiority, trampled on the Karelian Isthmus for three months, filling it with tens of thousands of corpses of Red Army soldiers, would be immediately smashed to smithereens at the first collision with the best army in the world, what in the summer of 41 could the German Wehrmacht rightfully be considered?

Mannerheim was wrong, but in this respect he was far from alone. On July 3, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, F. Halder, wrote in his diary: *"It would not be an exaggeration to say that the campaign against Russia was won within 14 days."* Neither Mannerheim, nor Halder, nor dozens of other politicians and generals (including those in the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition) could understand and believe that the Soviet-German war, the war between Stalin and Hitler, would turn into the Great

Patriotic war of the Soviet people. This was their fundamental mistake. But let's not be too strict - what can be demanded from contemporaries of rapidly passing events, if to this day the majority of Soviet (now Russian) historians do not want to understand and recognize this really difficult dialectic of the transition from a fight unleashed by two dictators for the division of booty to the Great Liberation a war in which a great nation has risen. Returning to the spring of 1941, we cannot help

but admit that from the assumption of the inevitable and imminent defeat of the Red Army, a completely different strategy for Finland's actions loomed. Who was to leave the territory of Karelia? Germans? The Barbarossa plan, as you know, set the ultimate goal of the operation as *"creating a barrier along the general Volga-Arkhangelsk line."* At the same time, all the territories of the north of Russia, inhabited by Karelians, Finns, and Veps, were supposed to enter the zone of German occupation. Moreover, after the successful implementation of the Barbarossa plan, Finland's eastern neighbor would no longer be the Soviet Union, but Hitler's Third Reich, which, moreover, was strengthened many times due to the raw materials and production resources of the former USSR.

In real history, Mannerheim refused the repeated proposals of the German command to attack the connection with the Wehrmacht from the Svir River to Tikhvin and Volkhov and directed the main efforts of the Finnish army to create a defensive line along the Segozero-Lake Onega line. Svir-Ladoga lake. From whom, from what army was Mannerheim going to defend himself at this line? Isn't it from German? With a strong desire,

you can, of course, find something in common between the actions of the Finnish leadership in the summer of 1941 and the Red Army's invasion of Poland in September 1939. Yes, there are similarities: in both cases, the main propaganda argument was "protection of half-brothers, abandoned to the mercy of fate by the former unlucky rulers. However, at this rather formal than substantive moment, all coincidences end, and a huge, fundamental difference opens up in the goals and results of the actions of Stalin and Mannerheim. In September 1939, Stalin could have saved Poland, but chose to destroy it.

Mannerheim and his valiant army, due to the huge difference in size, could not radically change the course of hostilities in the summer of 1941 and save the Red Army from defeat. In September 1939, Stalin occupied half (52%) of the territory of Poland, on which more than a third of the total population lived before the war. In the autumn of 1941, the Finnish army occupied an area that was home to less than one-third of a percent of the population of the USSR and lacked any significant military-industrial enterprises. In September 1939, the mutual goal of Stalin and Hitler was the elimination of Polish statehood (which was directly and clearly stated in joint documents that were published on the front page of the Pravda newspaper), and the crushing blow of the Red Army greatly contributed to the achievement of this criminal goal. . Finland, on the other hand, liberated the territories annexed from it and tried to save its fellow tribesmen from Stalinist terror, and it was not her fault that this could only be achieved by military means ... After Stalingrad and Kursk, Stalin would no longer make any concessions to the Finns. From that moment (from the summer of 1943) Finland only had to wait

inevitable retribution for her complicity in Hitler's war. In hindsight, it can be assumed that somewhere in the year 42 there was a moment when the Finnish leadership could withdraw from the war, decisively breaking with Germany and agreeing to significant territorial concessions to Stalin. Perhaps in 1942 such an agreement with Moscow was still possible. In any case, the conclusion of peace with Finland, which automatically meant a "peaceful breakthrough" of the blockade of Leningrad, met both the immediate and long-term interests of the Soviet and Finnish peoples. The failure to reach such an agreement weighs heavily on the conscience of the political leaders of the two countries. Whether attempts were made to reach such an agreement is unknown to the author of this book. Summing up all of

the above, we have to agree that the leaders of Finland could not find such a way out of the endlessly complex and unpredictable situation of 1940-1941 that would protect the interests and honor of their country. And yet, on the scales of history, the tragic mistakes made in the struggle to save the Finnish people and their statehood should have a different weight than the aggressive stupidity of Stalin and his henchmen.

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